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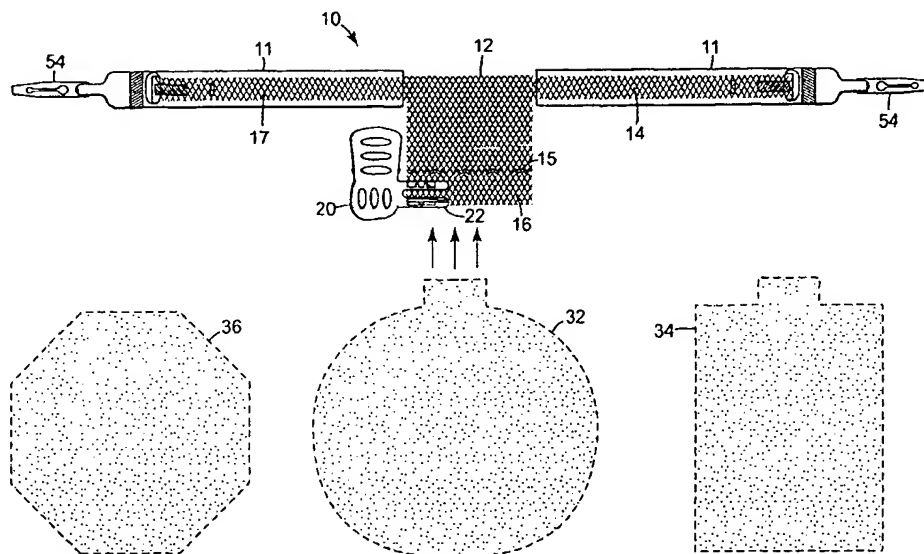
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(54) Title: **IMPROVED PELVIC HEALTH IMPLANTS AND METHODS**



(57) Abstract: Surgical articles, implants and components suitable for female pelvic health procedures are described.

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IMPROVED PELVIC HEALTH IMPLANTS AND METHODS

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application claims priority to U.S. Patent Application No. _____, filed April 25, 2003 (Attorney-Docket No. AMS-142), and to U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/380,591, filed May 15, 2002; and U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/456,750, filed March 21, 2003.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Pelvic floor disorders include cystocele, rectocele, enterocele, and prolapse such as anal, uterine and vaginal vault prolapse. A cystocele is a hernia of the bladder, usually into the vagina and introitus. These disorders typically result from weakness or damage to normal pelvic support systems.

[0003] In its severest forms, vaginal vault prolapse can result in the distension of the vaginal apex outside of the vagina. An enterocele is a vaginal hernia in which the peritoneal sac containing a portion of the small bowel extends into the rectovaginal space. Vaginal vault prolapse and enterocele represent challenging forms of pelvic disorders for surgeons. These procedures often involve lengthy surgical procedure times.

[0004] Synthetic implants have been used to address pelvic organ prolapse. See Julian, *The Efficacy of Marlex Mesh in the Repair of Severe, Recurrent Vaginal Prolapse of the Anterior Midvaginal Wall*, Am. J. Obstet Gynec, Vol. 175, No. 6 (1996) (Pps 1472-1475). A hammock-shaped polypropylene mesh is described in Nicita, *A New Operation For Genitourinary Prolapse*, J. of Urology, Vol. 160, 741-745 (Sept. 1998). The mesh is taut and anchored transversely between the two arcus tendineus of the endopelvic fascia and in the anteroposterior direction between the bladder and uterine necks. The width of the mesh is equal to the anteroposterior dimension of cystocele.

[0005] Migliari et al used a 5 x 5 cm mixed (60% polyglactin 910 and 40% polyester) fiber mesh to treat cystocele. See Migliari et al., *Treatment Results Using a Mixed Fiber Mesh in Patients With Grade IV Cystocele*, J. of Urology, Vol. 161, 1255-1258 (April 1998). Meshes provided in square or rectangular configurations must be trimmed to form a complex shape. This can add to the length of the surgical procedure.

[0006] Vaginal vault prolapse is often associated with a rectocele, cystocele or enterocele. It is known to repair vaginal vault prolapse by suturing to the utero sacral ligaments, the sacrospinous ligaments or the levator muscles. It is also known to repair prolapse by attaching the vaginal vault through mesh or fascia to the sacrum. Many patients suffering from vaginal vault prolapse also require a surgical procedure to correct stress urinary incontinence that is either symptomatic or latent.

[0007] Italian Patent No. 01299162 describes a first prosthesis mesh having a first section designed to be applied to a bladder cavity and a second section designed to be applied to the bladder below the bladder neck. The first prosthesis includes a pair of flaps that are designed to be applied to the urethropelvic ligament and are separated from the first section by slits. The first prosthesis may be used to treat urogenital prolapse. A second prosthesis for treating rectocele is disclosed. The second prosthesis is separate and distinct from the first prosthesis.

[0008] A sacral colpopexy is a procedure for providing vaginal vault suspension. It may be performed through an abdominal incision or laparoscopically. Complications include mesh infection, mesh erosion, bowel obstruction, and bleeding from the presacral venous complex. Typically, this procedure is accompanied by an abdominal enterocele repair and cul-de-sac obliteration.

[0009] A sacral colpopexy entails suspension of the vaginal cuff to the sacrum with fascia or synthetic mesh. The synthetic mesh is typically carefully customized or assembled into a special shape by the surgeon. A surgeon manually cuts a sheet of the mesh and stitches elements of the mesh to form the special shape. The literature reports surgeons suturing mesh material into various T-shaped articles. See Paraiso et

al, *Laparoscopic Surgery for Enterocele, Vaginal Apex Prolapse and Rectocele*, Int Urogynecol J (1999), 10:223-229.

[0010] A sacral colpopexy can be a tedious, challenging surgical procedure. Average procedure lengths of 247 minutes were reported in Winters et al., *Abdominal Sacral Colpopexy and Abdominal Enterocele Repair in the Management of Vaginal Vault Prolapse*, Urology 56 (Suppl 6A) (2000): 55-63. At least some of this time can be attributed to the time required for the surgeon to construct an implant. Non-laparoscopic surgical procedure lengths can be shorter, but such procedures involve a large abdominal incision with the attendant risk of morbidity and infection. Many surgeons seek to avoid sacral colpopexy procedures for a variety of different reasons, including the amount of surgical activity in proximity to sensitive areas such as the sacrum.

[0011] It is reported that 72% of patients with vault prolapse had a combination of other pelvic floor defects. See Richter K: *Massive Eversion of the Vagina: Pathogenesis, Diagnosis and Therapy of the True Prolapse of the Vaginal Stump*, Clin. Obstet Gynecol 25:897-912 (1982). If surgical correction of cystocele, rectocele or stress incontinence is performed in the presence of untreated vaginal vault prolapse, it is speculated that an early recurrence of prolapse is extremely likely. When it is considered that it is often necessary to correct multiple pelvic floor disorders simultaneously, the time factor for surgeons is particularly challenging. See, Diana et al., *Treatment of Vaginal Vault Prolapse with Abdominal Sacral Colpopexy Using Prolene Mesh*, American Journal of Surgery, Vol. 179, (Feb. 2000), Pps. 126-128.

[0012] A sacrospinous ligament fixation surgical procedure is a procedure that involves attaching the vault of the vagina to the sacrospinous ligament. See Guner et al., *Transvaginal Sacrospinous Colpopexy For Marked Uterovaginal and Vault Prolapse*, Inter. J. of Gynec. & Obstetrics, 74 (2001) Pps. 165-170. Sacrospinous ligament fixation procedures are believed to require specialized, technical skills. There are additional drawbacks. For example, the procedure tends to place the vagina

in an artificial anatomical position (as opposed to a natural position), especially if the procedure is performed unilaterally which tends to pull the vagina to one side.

[0013] U.S. Pat. No. 5,840,011 discloses an implant for suspension of the urinary bladder to treat incontinence. The implant includes four securement appendages. The patent states that two securement appendages are drawn retrosymphysally between the bladder and vagina and are positioned exactly. The other two securement appendages are fixed to the ligamentum pubicum superior behind the two pubic rami.

[0014] U.S. Pat. No. 6,306,079 discloses a mesh pubovaginal sling comprising two mesh pieces, including a first mesh portion of polypropylene and a second mesh portion comprising an absorbable material. One piece is inserted at the endopelvic fascia and the other at the suprapubic region.

[0015] PCT Publication No. WO 00/64370 (Gaston) describes a device for treating a prolapse by vaginal suspension. The device comprises an elongate, flexible, pierced material, a suture connected to the material and a suture needle joined to the suture. The device is long enough to enable posterior suspension of the vagina at the promontory (i.e. the front upper part of the sacrum). The other end of the device includes a distal portion having a width such that it can cover at least a large part of the posterior part of the vagina, a rounded cut-out with dimensions that enable it to be engaged around the base of the vagina on at least a large part of the lower half of the wall of the vagina. The suture is connected to the article so that it is offset sideways in relation to the cut-out.

[0016] PCT Publication No. WO 00/27304 (ORY et al.) discloses a suspension device for treating prolapse and urinary incontinence. The device comprises at least one filiform suspension cord with limited elasticity and at least two anchoring parts linked to the ends of the cord.

[0017] U.S. Pat. No. 5,112,344 and PCT Publication No. PCT/US02/32284 disclose surgical devices for female pelvic health procedures. The IVS Tunneller device is available from U.S. Surgical of Norwalk, CT. The IVS device comprises a fixed delta

wing handle, a hollow metal tube and a stylet that is placeable within the tube. The stylet has a rounded plastic tip on one end and an eyelet at the other end. The device may be used to implant a polypropylene tape for infracoccygeal sacropexy and other surgical procedures. See Farnsworth, *Posterior Intravaginal Slingplasty (Infracoccygeal Sacropexy) For Severe Posthysterectomy Vaginal Vault Prolapse – A Preliminary Report on Safety and Efficacy*, Int. Urogynecol. J. (2002) 13:4-8; Petros, *Vault Prolapse II: Restoration of Dynamic Vaginal Supports by Infracoccygeal Sacropexy, an Axial Day-Case Vaginal Procedure*, Int Urogynecol J (2001) 12:296-303; and Petros, *The Intravaginal Slingplasty Operation, a Minimally Invasive Technique for Cure of Urinary Incontinence in the Female*, Aust. NZ J Obstet Gynaecol, (1996); 36: 4:453.

[0018] A single, rigid, hollow metal tube is associated with the IVS Tunneller device. This single tube passes through two separate regions of the patient's body with the attendant risk of cross contamination. The outer diameter of the tube is also relatively large (about 0.25 inches) with the attendant risk of tissue damage due to a large diameter needle.

[0019] The polypropylene tape supplied with the IVS Tunneller is a thin, rectangular shape, believed to be approximately 8 mm x 350 mm. The thin, rectangular tape supplied with the IVS Tunneller is not believed to be optimally sized and shaped to afford concomitant procedures such as enterocoele, cystocoele and/or rectocoele repairs encountered in many cases. The tape is also inextensible. Under a longitudinal force, the implant is highly resistant to elongation. It is believed that inextensible polypropylene tapes may be apt to exhibit a greater association with erosion and failure.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0020] In one aspect, the present invention comprises a novel implant suitable for addressing one or more disorders including incontinence, cystocoele, rectocoele, enterocoele and prolapse (e.g. uterine and/or vaginal vault). Preferably, the implant is conformable to irregular surfaces and to accommodate different anatomy shapes

and sizes. In one embodiment, the implant is preassembled or pre-cut in a predetermined shape to simultaneously address incontinence and cystocele repairs in a tension-free manner and to afford efficient use of the surgeon's time. In another embodiment, the implant includes features affording convenient assembly of a composite implant so that the implant may be customized according to the surgeon's preference or the needs of a particular surgical procedure. In yet another embodiment, the implant includes indicia for convenient trimming of a bulk implant to address the particular needs of a procedure.

[0021] In one aspect, the present invention comprises a mesh having a major portion that is sized and shaped to afford repair of a cystocele. The implant is preferably secured in the body without lifting the patient's bladder and without placing tension on the bladder. The implant includes a urethral support portion capable of being placed underneath the patient's urethra; and first and second sling appendages to be placed on different sides of the urethra.

[0022] The sling appendages may be sized and shaped to be secured in the patient's abdominal rectus fascia. Alternatively, the sling appendages may be sized and shaped to extend from a region near the patient's urethra to at least the patient's obturator foramen.

[0023] The portion of the implant generally opposite the sling appendages may take a variety of different forms. In one embodiment, the portion of the implant opposite the sling appendages may be designed to merely address a cystocele or both a cystocele and a rectocele. In another embodiment, it may be sufficiently long and appropriately shaped to extend to incisions on opposite sides of the patient's anus. In another embodiment, it may have a length sufficient to afford anchoring in the region of the patient's sacrum, or the sacrospinous ligaments, or the uterosacral ligaments, or the levator ani tissues.

[0024] For certain configurations of implant and for certain uses of the implant (e.g. posterior vaginal vault repair), the present invention comprises constructing the implant from a longitudinally extendable material. This affords an implant that is

relatively longitudinally extendable, unlike prior art implants used in posterior vault repair procedures. In this aspect, the present invention comprises a synthetic mesh material having a portion adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region, a first posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region to a first incision in the patient's buttocks that is lateral to the patient's anus; and a second posterior securement appendage that extends to the opposite side of the patient's anus.

[0025] The bulk material from which the mesh is supplied has at least a Longitudinal Elongation Factor (LEF) of at least 0.06 under a ½ pound load. More preferably, the bulk material from which the mesh is supplied has at least a Longitudinal Elongation Factor (LEF) of more than about 0.08 under a ½ pound load, even more preferably it is more than about 0.15. Preferably, bulk material from which the mesh is supplied has a Longitudinal Elongation Factor (LEF) of more than about 0.08 under a 1 pound load, more preferably it is more than about 0.1 under a 1 pound load, and even more preferably it is more than about 0.2 under a 1 pound load.

[0026] Preferably, the synthetic mesh materials used comprise bulk knitted polypropylene monofilaments, but a variety of different materials are contemplated. The implant is preferably knitted to be supple, conformable and to afford tissue ingrowth. In one embodiment the implant is a composite constructed of two different implantable materials.

[0027] In another aspect, the present invention comprises a synthetic mesh material having a portion adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region, a first posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region toward a first incision in the patient's buttocks that is lateral to the patient's anus; a second posterior securement appendage placeable on a side of the patient's anus different than that of the first posterior securement appendage. The implant includes a first flexible insertion sheath associated with at least a portion of the first posterior securement appendage, and a second flexible insertion sheath associated with at least a portion of the second posterior securement appendage.

[0028] Preferably, the first and second posterior securement appendages have distal end regions adapted to be secured in the patient's ischioanal or ischiorectal fossa. Alternatively, the first and second posterior securement appendages have distal end regions adapted to be secured in the patient's sacrospinous ligaments or the uterosacral ligaments or levator ani tissue.

[0029] In another aspect, the present invention comprises an implant assembly suitable for placement through incisions in the patient's buttocks on opposite sides of the anus. The novel implant assemblies include one or more of: i) connectors for associating the implant assembly with the distal end of an insertion needle, ii) dilators for dilating tissue, iii) insertion sheaths, iv) tensioning sutures, and v) an elongatable, conformable mesh.

[0030] In another aspect, the present invention comprises a surgical implant for addressing incontinence and cystocele disorders comprising a synthetic mesh material having a cystocele repair portion adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region, a first posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region toward a first incision in the patient's buttocks; and a second posterior securement appendage opposite the first. The implant includes a urethral support portion capable of being placed underneath the patient's urethra; a first sling appendage for securement on a first side of the patient's urethra; and a second sling appendage for securement on a side of the patient's urethra generally opposite the first.

[0031] In another aspect, the present invention comprises a synthetic mesh material having a portion adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region. The mesh has a first posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region toward a first incision in the patient's buttocks; and a second posterior securement appendage opposite the first. In this embodiment, the first and second posterior securement appendages include a connector for associating the first and second posterior securement appendages with a distal end of an insertion needle.

[0032] The present invention includes surgical kits comprising first and second insertion needles having distal ends. Preferably, the first and second insertion needles are configured so that their distal ends may be initially inserted through an incision in the patient's buttocks and then passed through tissue, emerging through a vaginal incision. The kits also include an implant comprising a synthetic mesh material having a portion adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region to repair, for example, a vaginal vault prolapse. The mesh has a first posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region toward a first incision in the patient's buttocks; and a second posterior securement appendage generally opposite the first. Preferably, this embodiment includes first and second flexible insertion sheaths associated with at least a portion of the first and second posterior securement appendages.

[0033] In another embodiment, the present invention comprises a synthetic mesh having a major portion, and at least four projections extending from the major portion. One of the projections is adapted to be placed on a first side of the patient's urethra and extend from the patient's urethral region to the patient abdominal rectus fascia, and another of the projections is adapted to be placed on a side of the patient's urethra generally opposite the first side. This embodiment preferably includes at least one connector (preferably four) for associating the implant with at least one (preferable four) insertion needle.

[0034] In another aspect, the present invention comprises a modular assembly for affording construction of a surgical implant for addressing one or more pelvic floor disorders. The assembly comprises an anterior element for affording a sling-like implant; a posterior element for securement in a posterior region of the patient's body; and a cystocele repair portion for affording repair of a cystocele, wherein the cystocele repair portion may be associated with either the anterior element or the posterior element or both elements. Preferably the assembly includes a means for facilitating association between elements of the assembly. Also preferably, the cystocele repair portion includes indicia to facilitate trimming to adjust the implant to different sizes. A rectocele repair portion may also be provided.

[0035] In yet another aspect, the present invention comprises novel surgical procedures that utilize the novel implants and implant assemblies.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0036] Other features and advantages of the present invention will be seen as the following description of particular embodiments progresses in conjunction with the drawings, in which:

[0037] Fig. 1 is a top view of an assembly for creating a composite implant, showing three different options for a portion of the implant;

[0038] Fig. 2 is a perspective view of a portion of a component of Fig. 1, showing the component in an open position;

[0039] Fig. 3 is top view of another embodiment of implant according to an aspect of the present invention;

[0040] Fig. 4 is a top view of another embodiment of implant;

[0041] Fig. 5 is a top view of another embodiment of implant;

[0042] Fig. 6 is an exploded perspective view of a surgical kit according to another aspect of the present invention;

[0043] Fig. 7 is a schematic view illustrating a cystocele;

[0044] Fig. 's 8 through 13 sequentially illustrate an embodiment of a surgical procedure according to an aspect of the present invention, wherein:

[0045] Fig. 8 is a schematic view showing the locations of incisions proximate ischioanal fossa or ischiorectal fossa, and two separate needles for passage through an incision;

[0046] Fig. 9 schematically illustrates a surgeon passing a surgical needle from the incision proximate the patient's ischioanal fossa or ischiorectal fossa to a vaginal incision;

[0047] Fig. 10 is a schematic side view showing the distal end of the needle of Fig. 9 after it emerges from an incision in the region of the vaginal apex, and a dilator connector of an implant;

[0048] Fig. 11 is a schematic illustration of the surgeon guiding the distal end of the needle of Fig. 10;

[0049] Fig. 12 is a perspective view of an implant after it has been placed in a patient and showing portions of the implant emerging from the incisions proximate the patients ischioanal fossa or ischiorectal fossa;

[0050] Fig. 13 is a schematic side view showing one embodiment of implant according to the present invention after it has been inserted in the patient;

[0051] Fig. 14 is a top view of another embodiment of implant;

[0052] Fig. 15 is a top view of another embodiment of implant;

[0053] Fig. 16 is a top view of another embodiment of implant similar to Fig. 15 with an additional element shown in phantom lines;

[0054] Fig. 17 is a bottom view of another embodiment of implant according to the present invention;

[0055] Fig. 18 is an enlarged perspective view of a portion of the implant of Fig. 17;

[0056] Fig. 19 is a schematic view of the implant of Fig. 17 implanted *in vitro*;

[0057] Fig. 20 is a top view of another embodiment of implant according to the present invention;

[0058] Fig. 21 is a schematic view of the initial length of a piece of bulk material, which view helps describe a test for determining a material's Longitudinal Elongation Factor;

[0059] Fig. 22 is a schematic side view of a force being applied to the material of Fig. 21, and showing an elongation distance;

[0060] Fig. 23 is another embodiment of implant according to the present invention, which implant includes indicia to afford convenient trimming to a predetermined shape;

[0061] Fig. 24 is a side view of a portion of the implant of Fig. 23, taken approximately at lines 24-24 in Fig. 23;

[0062] Fig. 25 is a perspective view of a novel assembly for addressing vaginal vault prolapse that includes a longitudinally extendable sling;

[0063] Fig. 26 is a top view of another embodiment of the present invention; and

[0064] Fig. 27 is a top view of an assembly for creating a composite implant, showing an anterior portion, a major portion and a posterior portion, and showing three different options for a major portion of the implant.

[0065] Detailed Description

[0066] The following description is meant to be illustrative only and not limiting. Other embodiments of this invention will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art in view of this description.

[0067] The present invention is directed to surgical instruments, assemblies and implantable articles for treating one or more pelvic floor disorders including cystocele, rectocele, enterocele, incontinence and uterine, anal or vaginal vault prolapse.

[0068] Referring to Fig.'s 1 and 2, there is shown a modular assembly 10 for creating a customized surgical implant for treating a female patient's pelvic health disorder. The assembly includes a mesh. The mesh may be assembled from diverse materials. For example, the mesh may be assembled from a synthetic material 12 and a non-synthetic material (e.g. one of 32, 34 or 36).

[0069] The assembly 10 has a major or cystocele repair portion (e.g. 32, 34 or 36) that is sized and shaped to afford repair of a cystocele without lifting the patient's bladder and without placing undue tension on the bladder or vaginal wall. The major portions may have a predetermined size and shape. For example one major portion may be sized and shaped to correct a midline defect. Another major portion may be sized and shaped to address a lateral defect. Yet another major portion may be designed to address large defects, while another may be designed to address a small defect.

[0070] Preferably, the implant may be implanted in a tension free manner and affords tissue in-growth for vaginal wall support. Alternatively the major portion may have a portion that is sized and shaped to address a rectocele. The rectocele portion may be provided as an integral piece or it may be attachable.

[0071] The implant also includes a urethral support portion 12 capable of being placed underneath the patient's urethra, a first sling appendage 14 for securement on a first side of the patient's urethra; and a second sling appendage 17 for securement on a side of the patient's urethra generally opposite the first side. The urethral support portion 12 is preferably placed adjacent a mid region of the urethra in a tension free manner. Other placements are also contemplated herein such as at the bladder neck.

[0072] In one embodiment, the first sling appendage 14 is sized, shaped and configured to extend from a region near the patient's urethra to an incision in the patient's abdominal rectus fascia, on a first side of the patient's urethra, and the second sling appendage 17 is sized, shaped and configured to extend from a region near the patient's urethra to an incision in the patient's abdominal rectus fascia, on a side of the patient's urethra generally opposite the first side. In this embodiment, the

width of the sling appendages 14 and 17 is preferably between 0.5 and 2 cm, more preferably between about 0.7 and 1.2 cm, more preferably about 1.1 cm. The distance between the ends of the sling appendages 14 and 17 (the transverse length) is preferably between about 40 and 60 cm, more preferably between 45 and 55 cm and even more preferably about 50 cm. As shown in Figure 1, the implant 10 includes optional insertion sheaths 11, described in greater detail below.

[0073] In another embodiment, the first sling appendage 14 is sized, shaped and configured to extend from a region near the patient's urethra to the patient's obturator foramen, on a first side of the patient's urethra, and the second sling appendage 17 is sized, shaped and configured to extend from a region near the patient's urethra to the patient's other obturator foramen, on a side of the patient's urethra generally opposite the first side. In this embodiment, the width of the sling appendages 14 and 17 is preferably between 0.5 and 2 cm, more preferably between about 0.7 and 1.2 cm, more preferably about 1.1 cm. The distance between the ends of the sling appendages 14 and 17 (the transverse length) is preferably between about 30 and 40 cm, and even more preferably about 35 cm. Surgical tools for inserting a sling in the region of the patient's obturator foramen are disclosed in U.S. Pat. Appl. No. 10/306,179, filed Nov. 27, 2002.

[0074] In a preferred embodiment, one material comprises a synthetic material (e.g. 12) and another material comprises a biomaterial (e.g. 32 in Fig. 1) or non-synthetic material. In another embodiment, one material comprises an absorbable material and the other material comprises a non-absorbable or permanent material. In another embodiment, one portion may be resorbable or absorbable, another portion may be non-absorbable and another portion may be constructed of a different material. A naturally occurring biomaterial may be used or a tissue engineered material may be used.

[0075] As used in this application, when it is said that one implant material is different than another implant material, it is meant that the materials substantially differ in a feature that can potentially affect a surgical procedure for treating a

urological disorder, including the efficacy and/or results. Features that can be different according to the present invention include, but are not limited to the ability of the sling to avoid infections or tissue erosion (actual or perceived), the shelf life of the material, the type of material, the shape of the material, the presence of a sling tensioning member (e.g. as disclosed in Published U.S. Pat. Appl. No. 2002/107430-A1), the present of a sling adjustment feature (as described in U.S. Pat. Appl. No. 10/004,185 filed October 30, 2001), sling material treatment (e.g. heat set) or coating, the porosity of the sling material, the shape of the sling material, the strength of the material, the elastic property of the material, the potential for tissue ingrowth, the biocompatibility of the material, and the presence or absence of an insertion sheath. Examples of treatments or coatings include anti-microbials, anti-biotics or other drug coatings.

[0076] Suitable non-synthetic materials include allografts, homografts, heterografts, autologous tissues, cadaveric fascia, autodermal grafts, dermal collagen grafts, autofascial heterografts, whole skin grafts, porcine dermal collagen, lyophilized aortic homografts, preserved dural homografts, bovine pericardium and fascia lata. Suitable synthetic materials for a sling include polymerics, metals (e.g. silver filigree, tantalum gauze mesh, and stainless steel mesh) and plastics and any combination of such materials.

[0077] Commercial examples of non-absorbable materials include Marlex™ (polypropylene) available from Bard of Covington, RI, Prolene™ (polypropylene), Prolene Soft Polypropylene Mesh or Gynemesh (nonabsorbable synthetic surgical mesh), both available from Ethicon, of New Jersey, and Mersilene (polyethylene terphthalate) Hernia Mesh also available from Ethicon, Gore-Tex™ (expanded polytetrafluoroethylene) available from W. L. Gore and Associates, Phoenix, Az., and the polypropylene sling available in the SPARC™ sling system, available from American Medical Systems, Inc. of Minnetonka, Minnesota. Commercial examples of absorbable materials include Dexon™ (polyglycolic acid) available from Davis and Geck of Danbury, CT, and Vicryl™ available from Ethicon. Other examples of suitable materials include those disclosed in published U.S. Pat. Application No.

2002/0072694. More specific examples of synthetic sling materials include, but are not limited to polypropylene, cellulose, polyvinyl, silicone, polytetrafluoroethylene, polygalactin, Silastic, carbon-fiber, polyethylene, nylon, polyester (e.g. Dacron) polyanhydrides, polycaprolactone, polyglycolic acid, poly-L-lactic acid, poly-D-L-lactic acid and polyphosphate esters. See Cervigni et al., *The Use of Synthetics in the Treatment of Pelvic Organ Prolapse*, Current Opinion in Urology (2001), 11: 429-435.

[0078] The embodiment shown in Fig. 's 1 and 2 includes an assembly tool 20. Preferably, the implant 10 includes a Y-shaped portion including legs 16 and 18 and seam 15. A suitable assembly tool is disclosed in U.S. Pat. Application No. 10/335,119, filed Dec. 31, 2002. Alternative approaches for forming the juncture between two dissimilar materials are also disclosed in that patent application. Preferably, the seam or juncture portion 15 is preferably spaced from the portion 12 of the implant 10 for supporting the urethra so that it does not lie directly under the urethra. For example, the seam or junction 15 could be spaced between about 1 cm and about 5 cm from the edge, more preferably between 2 cm and 4 cm, more preferably about 3 cm from the parallel edge. In an alternative embodiment, the seam or junction may be placed on the major portion 32, 34 or 36 and the portion of the implant near reference character 12 could be free of any seam or juncture.

[0079] As seen in Fig. 2, the tool 20 may be used to move first and second legs 16 and 18 of the implant 10 to an open position to afford insertion of another component of the implant (e.g. 32, 34 or 36). The tool has flanges 22 and 24 that are initially attached to the legs 16 and 18 and are detachable from the legs as disclosed in the '119 application. The tool 20 affords convenient suturing of one portion of the implant to another.

[0080] Figure 27 shows another modular assembly 700 for affording construction of a surgical implant for addressing one or more pelvic floor disorders. The assembly comprises an anterior element 10 for affording a sling-like implant. The anterior element 10 may be similar to the element 10 described with reference to Fig. 1, with

like reference characters indicating like elements. Unlike the assembly of Fig. 1, the assembly 700 of Fig. 27 also includes a posterior element 704. The posterior element 704 includes distal end portions 717 and 719 for securement in a posterior region of the patient's body. Optional insertion sheaths 711 and dilating connectors 754 may also be utilized.

[0081] The assembly 700 also includes a mid-portion or cystocele repair portion 32, 34 or 36 for affording repair of a cystocele. As depicted, the cystocele repair portion may be associated with either the anterior element or the posterior element or both elements. Preferably the assembly includes a means for facilitating association between elements of the assembly such as tools 20. Alternatively the tools 20 may be placed on the mid portion 32, 34 or 36 of the assembly 700 instead of the anterior and posterior portions. Also preferably, the cystocele repair portion includes indicia to facilitate trimming to adjust the implant to different sizes. A rectocele repair portion may also be provided. In alternative embodiments, the rectocele repair portion may be connected to the posterior portion 704 or the cystocele repair portion 32, 34 or 36.

[0082] Referring to Fig. 3, there is shown another embodiment of implant 40 according to the present invention. The implant 40 includes first and second sling appendages 42 and 44 and a portion adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region. The implant also has a first posterior securement appendage 46 that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region toward a first incision in the patient's buttocks and lateral to the patient's anus; and a second posterior securement appendage 48 that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region, on a side of the patient's anus different than that of the first posterior securement appendage, toward a second incision in the patient's buttocks that is on a side of the patient's anus opposite the first incision. Preferably, the first and second posterior securement appendages 46 and 48 have distal end regions adapted to be secured in the patient's ischioanal fossa or ischiorectal fossa. Alternatively, instead of the linear edges shown in Fig. 3, the securement appendages may include curved edges to provide arced or curved shaped appendages.

[0083] The implant 40 also preferably includes dilating connectors 54A. Suitable dilating connectors are disclosed in Published U.S. Pat. Application Nos. 2002/151762 and 2002/147382 and U.S. Pat. Application No. 10/386,897, filed March 11, 2003.

[0084] In one embodiment, the portion of the synthetic implant 40 designed to remain in vitro may comprise a mesh material. The mesh material comprises one or more woven, knitted or inter-linked filaments or fibers that form multiple fiber junctions throughout the mesh. The fiber junctions may be formed via weaving, molding, knitting, braiding, bonding, punching, ultrasonic welding or other junction forming techniques, including combinations thereof. In addition, the size of the resultant openings or pores of the mesh may be sufficient to allow tissue in-growth and fixation within surrounding tissue.

[0085] A wide variety of factors affect an implant material's longitudinal extensibility. The quantity and type of fiber junctions, yarn knit, fiber weave, pattern, and material type influence various sling properties or characteristics. Other factors include heat set of the individual strands, the degree of tension at heat setting of the monofilaments, the diameter of the monofilament yarn, the bar settings on the knitting machine, coatings and finishes.

[0086] Referring to Fig. 4, there is shown another embodiment of implant 80 according to the present invention. The implant comprises a synthetic mesh material that has a portion 82 adapted to be secured in the vaginal wall region via a vaginal incision. The synthetic mesh has incremental indices 80A, 80B and 80C that can be used as a guide to trim to specific anatomical requirements for lateral and/or central defects. The implant 80 has a first posterior securement appendage 86 that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region toward a first incision in the patient's buttocks and lateral to the patient's anus; and a second posterior securement appendage 84 that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region, on a side of the patient's anus different than that of the first posterior securement appendage, toward a second incision in the patient's

buttocks that is on a side of the patient's anus opposite the first incision. Preferably, the first and second posterior securement appendages 86 and 84 have distal end regions adapted to be secured in the patient's ischioanal fossa or ischiorectal fossa.

[0087] The implant 80 is preferably constructed from a longitudinally extensible material. Optionally, the implant 80 utilizes insertion sheaths 87 for the first and second posterior securement appendages 86 and 84. Also, the implant 80 preferably includes dilating connectors 54B adapted to associate the implant 80 with the distal end of an insertion needle.

[0088] The implant 80 is particularly suitable for accommodating varying degrees of cystocele repairs for a central and lateral (white line) support. For example, the ends of the portion 82 may be sized and shaped to be sutured to the patient's arcus tendeneus (white line). Alternatively, if such support is not required, the ends of the portion 82 could be secured to the sacrospinous ligaments, the levator ani tissues, the utero-sacral ligaments.

[0089] In a preferred embodiment, the implant 80 is inserted through a vaginal incision. The posterior appendages are used to secure the vault by being pulled through the ischiorectal fossa while the mid portion is secured to the vaginal tissue. Optionally, the appendages may be preattached to the cystocele patch portion or may be provided as a portion of a composite assembly, similar to assembly 10. Also, instead of the straight appendages shown, another embodiment may comprise curved appendages.

[0090] The indicia or markings 80A, 80B and 80C are preferably spaced a predetermined distance from an edge of the implant 80. The indicia 80A, 80B and 80C afford convenient, symmetrical trimming that can save surgical time. Alternatively, instead of the curved shape, the indicia 80A, 80B, 80C may comprise linear markings.

[0091] In another embodiment, the first sling appendage 86 may be sized, shaped and configured to extend from a region near the patient's urethra to the patient's obturator

foramen, on a first side of the patient's urethra, and a second sling appendage 84 may be sized, shaped and configured to extend from a region near the patient's urethra to the patient's other obturator foramen, on a side of the patient's urethra generally opposite the first side.

[0092] Referring to Fig. 5, there is shown another embodiment of implant 90 according to the present invention. The implant 90 comprises a synthetic mesh material that has a major portion 95 adapted to be secured in the vaginal wall region (e.g. the vaginal apex or cuff), preferably via a vaginal incision. The synthetic mesh has incremental indices 90A, 90B and 90C that can be used as a guide for trimming to specific anatomical requirements for lateral and/or central defects. The major portion 95 also includes a urethral support portion capable of being placed underneath the patient's urethra.

[0093] The implant 90 includes a first sling appendage 94 for securement on a first side of the patient's urethra; and a second sling appendage 92 for securement on a side of the patient's urethra generally opposite the first side. The first sling appendage 94 is sized, shaped and configured to extend from a region near the patient's urethra to an incision in the patient's abdominal rectus fascia, on a first side of the patient's urethra, and the second sling appendage 92 is sized, shaped and configured to extend from a region near the patient's urethra to an incision in the patient's abdominal rectus fascia, on a side of the patient's urethra generally opposite the first side.

[0094] A hole 99 may be provided in the implant 90 to afford convenient conformation of the implant 90 to irregular anatomical structures. Optionally, the hole 99 may be situated to encompass the vaginal incision used to insert the implant 90 to avoid any contact between the implant 90 and the incision.

[0095] In another embodiment, the first and second sling appendages are sized, shaped and configured to extend from a region near the patient's urethra to and/or through the patient's obturator foramen.

[0096] Referring to Fig. 6, in another aspect, the present invention comprises a surgical kit or assembly 100. The assembly 100 includes first and second insertion needles 116 and a longitudinally extendible implant capable of being secured in the posterior region of the patient's body.

[0097] In another embodiment of surgical kit according to the present invention, third and fourth insertion needles (not shown in Fig. 6) may also be provided. These needles may be substantially similar to the first and second insertion needles or they may be different. For example, the third and fourth insertions needles may be designed for a specific surgical approach (e.g. transobturator or suprapubic).

[0098] The first and second insertion needles 116 are configured so that their distal ends 158 may be initially inserted through an incision in the patient's buttocks and then passed through tissue, emerging through a vaginal incision. The first and second insertion needles preferably have an outer diameter of less than about 4mm, more preferably less than about 3.3 mm to minimize tissue disruption and damage.

[0099] The implant provided with the kit comprises a synthetic mesh material with a portion adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region (preferably by virtue of a suture that does not go through the vaginal mucosa), a first posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region toward a first incision in the patient's buttocks and lateral to the patient's anus; and a second posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region, on a side of the patient's anus different than that of the first posterior securement appendage, toward a second incision in the patient's buttocks that is on a side of the patient's anus opposite the first incision.

[00100] Preferably, the portion of the implant adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region is adapted to be sutured to the patient's vaginal apex. The implant 40 of Fig. 6 is a relatively complex shape, but alternatively, referring to Fig. 25 the implant can comprise a substantially rectangular, longitudinally extendible implant material 944 with first and second flexible insertion sheaths. The kit of Fig.

25 preferably includes dilating connectors 954 and at least two, relatively small (i.e. outer diameter less than about 4 mm) needles 960.

[00101] While the implant 40 depicted in Fig. 6 is preferably constructed from a longitudinally extendable material, it is within the scope of the present invention to provide a kit comprising an inextensible implant and at least two posterior implantation needles.

[00102] A surgical kit 100 according to the present invention may optionally include additional accessories. For example, a surgical drape specifically designed for urological procedures such as a sling procedure may be included in a kit of the present invention. Such a drape is disclosed in published U.S. Pat. Appl. No. 2002-078964-A1. Alternatively, an article for objectively setting tension of the sling, such as one of the articles described in U.S. Pat. Application No. 09/968,239, filed October 1, 2001 may be included in the kit.

[00103] The kits 100 preferably include at least two needles. In various embodiments of the present invention, the needles may comprise the needles described in published U.S. Pat. Application Nos. 20023-0065246-A1; 2002-0151762-A1; 2002-0147382-A1; 2002-0107430-A1, US-2002-0099258-A1 and US-2002-0099259-A1; and U.S. Provisional Application Serial Nos. 60/263,472, filed January 23, 2001; 60/269,829, filed February 20, 2001; 60/281,350, filed April 4, 2001; 60/295,068, filed June 1, 2001; 60/306,915, filed July 20, 2001, and 60/332,330, filed November 20, 2001. In an embodiment that is particularly suitable for a transobturator surgical procedure, the needles comprise needles as described in U.S. Patent Application No. 10/306,179 filed November 27, 2002.

[00104] The outer diameter of the optional dilators is also preferably small and may comprise the dilators disclosed in U.S. Patent Application No. 10/386,897 filed March 11, 2003.

[00105] In some instances the needles may be substantially identical, in other instances, they may be different. Two or more needles reduce the need to reuse a non-

sterile needle at a different location with a patient, thereby eliminating cross contamination issues. Additional needles, handles, dilators and other elements may also be included for surgical convenience, for avoidance of contamination from one portion of the body to another, for ease of manufacturing or sterilization or for surgical requirements.

[00106] The individual elements of the kits of the present invention may be packaged together as shown in Fig. 6 with a cover C and tray T. Alternatively, the individual elements may be separately packaged or packaged in subassemblies depending on a variety of factors such as shelf life and sterilization requirements. They may be assembled at the manufacturing location or at the healthcare location. Any suitable sterilization procedure may be utilized to sterilize the contents of a kit. Suitable sterilization techniques include, but are not limited to steam, ethylene oxide, electron beam, vapor (e.g. hydrogen peroxide or peracetic acid), gamma or plasma procedures.

[00107] The above-described insertion needles may be disposable or reusable. They may be malleable (manually bendable) or rigid. Optionally, portions of the insertion needles may be reusable (sterilizable) and other components may be disposable.

[00108] Figure 26 shows another embodiment of implant assembly 800 according to the present invention. The implant assembly 800 comprises a synthetic mesh having a major portion 842P, and at least four projections extending from the major portion 842P. The implant assembly 800 may be used as a hammock to support the bladder or for other procedures to address a cystocele or prolapse or a vaginal vault treatment. Each of the projections preferably has a dilating connector 854P associated with a distal end. The projections may be implanted via transobturator, suprapubic or posterior techniques. For example, one of the projections may be placed on a first side of the patient's urethra and extend from the patient's urethral region to the patient abdominal rectus fascia, and another of the projections is adapted to be placed on a side of the patient's urethra generally opposite the first side.

[00109] As another example, one of the projections may be anchored in the patient's right obturator foramen, another of the projections may be anchored in the patient's left obturator foramen and the other two projections may extend to the patient's rectus abdominus fascia. Various anchoring techniques may be utilized including those disclosed in published U.S. Patent application No. 2002/0161382-A1. In this embodiment, the central portion of the implant 800 may be secured in the vaginal region for vaginal vault or cystocele repairs.

[00110] In yet another embodiment, two of the projections may be anchored in the patient's left obturator foramen and the other two projections may be anchored in the patient's right obturator foramen. The central portion may be secured in the vaginal region to address pelvic disorders.

[00111] Referring now to Fig. 14, there is shown another embodiment of implant 200 according to the present invention. The implant 200 includes a synthetic mesh material having a portion 204 adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region, a first posterior securement appendage 212 that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region toward a first incision in the patient's buttocks and lateral to the patient's anus; and a second posterior securement appendage 214 that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region, on a side of the patient's anus different than that of the first posterior securement appendage, toward a second incision in the patient's buttocks that is on a side of the patient's anus opposite the first incision. Optionally, the implant 200 may include a first flexible insertion sheath 211 associated with at least a portion of the first posterior securement appendage, and a second flexible insertion sheath 211 associated with at least a portion of the second posterior securement appendage 214.

[00112] The implant 200 also includes a first sling appendage 216 for securement on a first side of the patient's urethra; and a second sling appendage 218 for securement on a side of the patient's urethra generally opposite the first side of the urethra. Optional insertion sheaths 211 may also be utilized.

[00113] The implant 200 may also include dilators 254 (e.g. as disclosed in published U.S. Pat. Appl. No. 2002/151762-A1). Preferably, the dilators 254 include a connector for connecting to the distal end of a surgical needle.

[00114] In a preferred embodiment, the first and second posterior securement appendages 212 and 214 have distal end regions adapted to be secured in the patient's ischioanal fossa or ischiorectal fossa. Alternatively, the first and second posterior securement appendages have distal end regions adapted to be secured in the patient's sacrospinous ligaments, the uterosacral ligaments, or the levator ani muscles. Preferably, the connectors include surfaces for dilating tissue.

[00115] The implant 200 also preferably includes a slit or slot 221. The slit 221 may help the implant 200 conform to irregular surfaces such as the vaginal apex or cuff. Alternatively, the slit may be designed to form a hole when the implant conforms to an irregular surface. In a preferred embodiment, that hole can be situated to encompass the vaginal incision used to insert the implant 200 to avoid post implantation contact between the implant 200 and the surgical incision.

[00116] The portion 204 is preferably sized and shaped to afford cystocele repairs. The maximum width of the central portion 204 is preferably between about 2 and 20 cm, and the length is also between about 2 and 20 cm. Markings may be provided to afford trimming in a symmetrical fashion or to provide strategic slits for conforming the implant to an irregular surface. A 6 inch x 6 inch or 15 cm x 15 cm central portion are within the scope of an aspect of the present invention. The appendages 212, 214, 216 and 218 may have the widths and lengths similar to the width and length ranges described with reference to previous embodiments. As an example, the length between distal ends of the appendages 212 and 214 as measured along their longitudinal axis and across a portion of central portion 204 is preferably between about 40 and 55 cm. The width is preferably between 0.5 and 1.5 cm. The length between distal ends of the appendages 216 and 218 as measured along their longitudinal axis and across a portion of central portion 204 may be slightly less than that of the appendages 212 and 214. For example, the length may be between about

25 cm and 50 cm, more preferably about 38 cm in length. The width may also be less, preferably between about 0.4 cm and about 1.2 cm.

[00117] In another embodiment of the invention of Fig. 14, the appendages 214 and 218 may be sized and shaped to extend to and/or through the patient's left obturator foramen, and the appendages 212 and 216 may be sized and shaped to extend to and/or through the patient's left obturator foramen. In this embodiment, both appendages 214 and 218 may be attached to a single dilator instead of two separate dilators in Fig. 14. Correspondingly, both appendages 212 and 216 may likewise be attached to a single dilator.

[00118] The appendages may project from the longitudinal axis of the major portion 204 at an angle between 0 and 90 degrees. Additionally, instead of the substantially rectangular, straight appendages, the appendages may be curved.

[00119] The implant 200 may be substantially symmetrical about its longitudinal axis. In some embodiment, the implant 200 may be asymmetrical about an axis transverse to the longitudinal axis. The implant may include indicia 208 indicating an appropriate position for trimming. If the implant is not symmetrical or would require a particular orientation (e.g. for the slit 221 to encompass the vaginal apex), the indicia 208 may include text or other symbols indicating the proper orientation (e.g. posterior or anterior).

[00120] Fig. 15 shows a unitary, modular implant 300. The implant 300 includes projections 312, 314, 316, 318 and a major portion with indicia 303, 305, 307. The indicia and size and shape of the implant 300 allow the surgeon to conveniently choose a portion of the graft for single and/or multiple repairs. For example, a bladder tape sling procedure can be accomplished either through a transobturator needle approach or suprapubic needle approach. The central portion can be trimmed to repair a central or lateral anterior vaginal wall repair. The demarcations 303, 305 and 307 can be utilized to help symmetrically trim either side to attach or lay a portion of the implant along the white line or arcus tendinae. The indicia may also be used to indicate strategic positions for slits to be placed to help the

implant conform to an irregular surface. While the indicia 303, 305 and 307 are shown as arcuate lines, other shapes, such as straight lines, are also within the scope of the present invention.

[00121] The posterior appendages 312 and 314 can be used to restore apical support by attaching the vaginal cuff to the mesh and pulling the appendages through rectal fascia to pull the apex back via the ischiorectal fossa needle passage or via the transobturator needle passage. The graft materials for the appendages or portions thereof may or may not be the same material as the central-portion depending on the preferred mesh properties for each repair. The middle portion of the graft 300 is preferably an open mesh knit to afford a supple and compliant graft in the anterior vaginal wall that allows tissue ingrowth. The appendages also preferably afford tissue ingrowth to afford anchoring in the fascia for bladder and vault support. The graft material 300 preferably has some demarcations 335 at the appendage sites as well as along the mid portion of the graft that can be used to identify where the surgeon can cut depending on what type of repair is to be conducted.

[00122] The implant 300 depicted in Fig. 15 does not include insertion sheath to point out that some complex shaped implants of the present invention could be constructed from a material that does not readily elongate under longitudinal forces. While not preferred, such an implant may be implanted by the use of preattached sutures 321 (described below).

[00123] The present invention contemplates a variety of different sizes and shapes for the central portion of the implant 300. As an example, not intended to be limiting, the central portion may comprise a 6 inch x 6 inch mesh. Other sizes are also contemplated (e.g. a 12 cm x 12 cm central portion, as the distance from one ischial spine to another is often about 9-10 cm). Alternatively, instead of a square or rectangular shaped central portion, the edges may be curved.

[00124] The implant 300 may be constructed from a longitudinally extendable or longitudinally non-extendable material. Optionally, sutures 321 may be preattached to the appendages 312, 314, 316 and 318. The sutures 321 may be used

to secure the implant 300 in the pelvic region. Alternatively, the sutures may connect an appendage to an insertion needle (e.g. with an eyelet or fish-hook shaped slot) to afford insertion of the implant. If a longitudinally extendable material is used, insertion sheaths may be provided for the appendages 312, 314, 316 and 318.

[00125] Optional dilators 354 are shown. The dilators include holes 351. Sutures 321 may be tied in holes 351 to afford association with the dilators 354. Notably, the sutures 321 for appendages 314 and 316 could be tied in the hole 351 of a single dilator 354 and then passed to the patient's obturator foramen. Other associations between an implant material, sutures, sheaths and dilator are contemplated herein including those shown in published U.S. Pat. Appl. No. 2002/147382-A1 and U.S. Pat. Application No. 10/386,897, filed March 11, 2003.

[00126] Referring to Fig. 16, there is shown an implant substantially identical to that of Fig. 15, with like reference characters in Fig. 16 being substantially the same as the elements of the implant shown in Fig. 15. Unlike Fig. 15, the implant shown in Fig. 16 a portion 330 that is sized and shaped to afford a concomitant rectocele repair. The portion 330 may, for example have a length of about 6 cm.

[00127] Another embodiment of implant 440 is shown in Fig.'s 17 and 18. The implant includes first and second sling portions 442 and 444. Preferably, the implant 440 includes insertion sheaths 441 and dilating connectors 454, but these may be omitted (e.g. if the implant is constructed from a suitable material). The implant 440 includes a mid portion 443 and flap 458 secured to the mid portion 443 along junction 445.

[00128] The implant 440 also includes first and second posterior securement appendages 446 and 448, preferably sized and shaped to be placed in the patient's ischioanal fossa or ischiorectal fossa. Optional insertion sheaths 447 and dilating connectors 454A may be provided.

[00129] Fig. 19 schematically illustrates the implant 443 after implantation. The sling appendages 442 and 444 are preferably placed mid-urethra in a tension free

manner. Alternatively, the sling appendages 442 and 444 may be placed at the bladder neck. The posterior securement appendage 446 (not shown in Fig. 19) and 448 are placed in the patient's buttocks region (e.g. ischia fossa) on opposite sides of the patient's anus A. The view is slightly distorted to illustrate certain details. For example, the posterior securement appendage 448 preferably exits at or about the level of the anus A, not above it as shown. The flap 458 and mid portion 443 are placed about the vaginal apex and can be secured by suturing to the vaginal tissue.

[00130] Fig. 20 shows another embodiment of implant 500 according to the present invention. The implant includes sling appendages 542 and 544 and optional insertion sheaths 541 and dilator connectors 554. Unlike implants with posterior securement appendages designed for implantation in the patient's buttocks, the implant 500 includes a portion having an end 501 that may be secured to the patient's sacrum (e.g. via bone anchors with associated sutures as shown in Published U.S. Pat. App. No. 2002/0028980) so that a combination sacral colpopexy and sling procedure can be accomplished with a single implant 500. Optionally, the implant 500 includes a flap similar to the flap 458 shown in Fig.'s 17-18. The length of the implant between end 501 and an opposite end may be between about 6 and 12 inches, more preferably between 8 and 12 inches. The width of end 501 is preferably between 0.75 and 2 inches wide. The optional flap may be situated between about 4 and 6 inches from the end 501.

[00131] Fig.'s 23 and 24 show another embodiment of implant 600 according to the present invention. The implant includes sling appendages 642 and 644 and optional dilators 654. The appendages may be curved or substantially rectangular (as shown) and may project from a major portion 643 of the material at an angle between 0 and 90 degrees. The implant 600 also has posterior securement appendages 646 and 648.

[00132] The implant 600 has indicia 651 and 653 that allow the implant to be used in a universal manner. The implant may be trimmed along the indicia 651 to address different sizes of cystocele, or rectocele and different anatomy sizes. In

addition to a trimming pattern, the indicia can include measurement marking (e.g. cm distances) to assist the surgeon in trimming the implant to its desired size and shape. For example, for a small anatomy or a small cystocele, the surgeon may trim along lines 651 and cut out a portion of the central part 643 of the implant. The surgeon need not trim along transverse indicia 653. Instead, the surgeon may trim along lines 651 and use the portion of the implant between the trims for a rectocele repair.

[00133] The implant preferably includes insertion sheaths 647 and 641. Referring to Fig. 24, the sheaths 647 preferably comprise an extendable member that can be movable from i) a retracted position with a portion of the sheath Z-folded as shown in Fig. 24, to ii) an extended position with additional of the material of the implant covered by the sheath. This is particularly useful when the portion of the implant along indicia 651 and 653 is removed. It is believed that extending the sheath over additional parts of the implant may afford a more convenient insertion of this portion of the implant. An extendable sheath may be accomplished in a variety of fashions including Z-folding the sheath, constructing the sheath of a stretchable or expandable material, and the like.

[00134] Examples of Materials

[00135] In one aspect, the present invention comprises a longitudinally extendable synthetic material in an implant secured in a posterior region of the body. For example, the implant of Fig. 25 is a rectangular implant that may be sutured or otherwise associated with the vaginal region (e.g. the vaginal apex) to address vaginal vault prolapse or to support the vault. Preferably, distal end regions 942 of the implant are secured in the ischioanal fossa or ischiorectal fossa of the patient's buttocks. The length of this embodiment is preferably between 25 and 45 cm, more preferably between 30 and 40 cm. The width is preferably between 0.5 cm and 1.5 cm, more preferably about 1 cm. The bulk synthetic may be knitted, woven, sprayed or punched from a blank.

[00136] Preferably, longitudinally extendible implants have an associated removable insertion sheath or sleeve (e.g. 47 in Fig. 3 or 944 in Fig. 25). The sheath

is preferably made of polyethylene and is substantially transparent or translucent. Other materials include without limitation, polypropylene, nylon, polyester or PTFE (polytetrafluoroethylene, Teflon). The sheath material should be flexible and provide sufficient structural integrity to withstand the various forces exerted on the sheath throughout the implant delivery procedure. The sheath should also conveniently separate from a knitted implant material after the implant is implanted without materially changing the position of the implant *in vitro*.

[00137] As Sample A (see below), a mesh included polypropylene monofilaments, knitted with a warp tricot. The stitch count was 27.5 courses/inch (+ or - 2 courses) and 13 wales/inch (+ or - 2 wales). The thickness of this example is 0.024 inches. The average flexural rigidity was about 257.8 (g-cm). The fiber size was about 0.0046 inches. The average mesh density (in g/cm³) was about 0.125. In Sample A, the holes comprised polygonal shaped holes with diagonals of 0.132 inches and 0.076 inches. A sample of this bulk material is available in the SPARC Sling System, commercially available from American Medical Systems of Minnetonka, Minnesota.

[00138] A test may be conducted on a 0.8 mm by 3 inch sample of a bulk material to determine its Longitudinal Extensibility Factor (LEF) under different loads. The test may utilize a series IX Automated Materials Testing System (an Instron), available from Instron Corporation. An 8 mm wide sample of the mesh may be placed in the Instron with a crosshead speed set at 5 in/min. The 3 inch test sample is inserted to provide a gauge length of 1 inch. Referring to Fig. 21, the length X is 1 inch.

[00139] Referring to Fig. 21, the bulk mesh material may be subjected to various loads F. The amount that the sample increases in length X' under the load F is shown in Figure 22.

[00140] The above identified test was conducted on three separate samples. The first sample (Prior Art) was an 8mm x 3 inch prior art sample obtained from the material provided with the IVS Tunneler product. Sample A was an ethylene oxide

sterilized mesh as described above. Sample B comprised a 0.8 mm x 3 inch sample of a Prolene Mesh, which is a knitted polypropylene monofilament mesh, commercially available from Ethicon of New Jersey. Sample B was tested both longitudinally and a direction perpendicular to the longitudinal direction.

[00141] Table 1 includes test results conducted on the Prior Art, and Samples A and B.

Longitudinal Elongation Factor						
Elongation (in/in of length) @ various loads (lbf)						
Sample #	0.5 lbf	1.0 lbf	1.5 lbf	2.0 lbf	Disp. At Max. Load	Load at Max Load (lbf)
Prior Art	0.05	0.07	0.090	0.11	0.434	10.58
A	0.17	0.23	0.28	0.33	1.267	12.96
B longitudinally	0.35	0.53	0.61	0.74	1.2	6.86
B Perpendicular to Long. Axis	0.082	0.17	0.28	0.37	0.80	12.43

[00142] A longitudinally extensible mesh exhibits at least a Longitudinal Elongation Factor (LEF) of 0.06 under a ½ pound load, more preferably a LEF of more than about 0.08 under a ½ pound load, and more preferably a LEF of more than about 0.15 under a ½ pound load. A longitudinally extensible mesh exhibits a LEF of at least 0.08 under a 1 pound load, more preferably a LEF of more than about 0.1 under a 1 pound load, and more preferably an LEF of more than about 0.2 under a 1 pound load. Additional results may be seen in the table.

[00143] In contrast, the longitudinally inextensible mesh associated with the IVS Tunneller device exhibited an LEF of less than 0.05 under a ½ pound load, and less than 0.07 under a 1 pound load.

[00144] Bulk mesh materials used to create Samples A and B may be cut into any of a wide variety of shapes, including those shown in the figures of this

application and others. For example, a simple rectangular shape may be utilized with dimensions of about 1 inch x about 6 inches. In this example, the mid region of the rectangle could be sutured to the vagina (e.g. in the vaginal apex region) and the ends of the longitudinally extendible material may be secured in the patient's ischioanal fossa or ischiorectal fossa.

[00145] Examples of Surgical Procedures

[00146] Several methods are contemplated herein. Although the methods of use as disclosed herein generally relate to female prolapse conditions and treatments/procedures, incontinence conditions and treatments/procedures are also included within the scope of the present invention.

[00147] A variety of different surgical approaches are contemplated herein including a supra-pubic (i.e. the distal end of a needle initially being inserted through an abdominal incision and then emerging from a vaginal incision), trans vaginal (the distal end of an insertion needle being initially inserted through a vaginal incision and then emerging from an abdominal incision), trans-obturator (e.g. the distal end of a needle initially being inserted through an incision in skin near the patient's obturator foramen and then emerging from a vaginal incision or vice versa) and posterior approaches. Preferably, the implants according to the present invention are inserted through a vaginal incision. Alternative insertion routes such as laparoscopic and through an open abdominal incision are also within the scope of the present invention.

[00148] It should be noted that the present invention is particularly suitable for placing an implant in a therapeutically effective position. The method may be utilized to support a variety of structures at different anatomical locations. Variations of these methods may occur due to individual surgeon's techniques or a patient's particular anatomy. For example, the amount of dissection employed varies greatly between surgeons and procedures. As another example, the particular order in which the elements of the implant are secured are also within the individual surgeon's discretion. Some surgeons may initially place a cystocele repair portion of an implant and then secure sling appendages. Others may initially place sling appendages and

then secure a cystocele portion of the implant. As yet another example, some surgeons may elect to secure an implant to the vaginal cuff or apex, other surgeons may elect to place sutures through the implant and a portion of the posterior or anterior wall of the vagina.

[00149] As another example, there are a variety of different methods of attaching an implant in the vaginal region for purposes of vaginal vault support or correction of vaginal vault prolapse. Some surgeons may suture a mid region of a rectangular mesh to the vaginal region (e.g. apex). This is preferably conducted without traversing through vaginal mucosa.

[00150] In embodiments of the present invention that include sling appendages, the sling appendages are preferably implanted mid-urethra in a tension free manner. Preferably the implant is slightly spaced from the urethra. Also preferably, in embodiments of implants that include a cystocele repair portion, the implant is secured in a tension free manner without traction on the bladder.

[00151] Fig. 7 schematically illustrates a patient's anatomy including the bladder B, urethra U, vagina V and anus A. The bladder B is shown slightly prolapsed into the vagina V. Often such patients exhibit stress urinary incontinence.

[00152] Referring to Fig.'s 8 through 13 schematically illustrate a procedure for addressing vaginal prolapse through a posterior surgical approach. Referring to Fig. 8, in contrast to some prior art surgical procedures, a kit according to the present invention utilizes two, independent sterile needles 116. Preferably, the needles 116 utilize handles 112 and have distal ends 158.

[00153] Incisions I' are placed laterally on each side of the anus A. Preferably, the incisions are placed proximate the patient's ischioanal fossa or ischiorectal fossa. Referring to Fig. 9, a needle 116 is passed initially through the incision I' and is guided to meet the surgeon's finger F. Fig. 11 shows the distal end 158 of the needle 116 meeting the surgeon's finger F exposed by retractors 103.

[00154] Figure 10 shows the distal end 158 of the needle 116 after it emerges from an incision I in the vaginal region (e.g. in the region of the vaginal apex or cuff). A dilator 58 (in this case associated with the implant and an insertion sheath) is then attached to the distal end of the needle. In this case, the implant may simply be a rectangular, longitudinally extendible implant and insertion sheath. To correct a vaginal prolapse with such an implant, the mid portion may be sutured to the vagina (e.g. in the vaginal cuff region) via the incision I. Then the distal ends of the implant may be connected to the distal ends 158 of the needles 116 and moved from the vaginal region through the ischioanal fossa or ischiorectal fossa IF and appropriately tensioned. Fig. 12 shows the distal ends of the mesh projecting through incisions in the buttocks. The insertion sheaths are then removed from the implant. Optional tensioning sutures in the mesh may optimally be provided to fine tune the final placement of the mesh. Tensioning sutures may also afford adjustment of implant position in the immediate post operative period. Preferably, the vagina is secured in a tension free manner.

[00155] Figure 13 illustrates placement of a more complex mesh shape according to the present invention. In this embodiment, two appendages of the implant 300 are passed suprapubically to provide sling like support to the urethra to address incontinence, and two other appendages are passed posteriorly through

ischioanal fossa or ischiorectal fossa to secure the implant 300. Notably, the implant 300 simultaneously addresses incontinence and prolapse.

[00156] Although the invention has been described in terms of particular embodiments and applications, one of ordinary skill in the art, in light of this teaching, can generate additional embodiments and modifications without departing from the spirit of or exceeding the scope of the claimed invention. Accordingly, it is to be understood that the drawings and descriptions herein are proffered by way of example to facilitate comprehension of the invention and should not be construed to limit the scope thereof.

What is claimed is:

1. A surgical implant for addressing a female patient's pelvic health disorder comprising:

a mesh having a major portion that is sized and shaped to afford repair of a cystocele without lifting the patient's bladder and without placing tension on the bladder, the major portion including a urethral support portion capable of being placed underneath the patient's urethra;

a first sling appendage for securement on a first side of the patient's urethra; and

a second sling appendage for securement on a side of the patient's urethra generally opposite the first side.

2. A surgical implant according to claim 1 wherein the first sling appendage is sized, shaped and configured to extend from a region near the patient's urethra to the patient's abdominal rectus fascia, on a first side of the patient's urethra, and

the second sling appendage is sized, shaped and configured to extend from a region near the patient's urethra to the patient's abdominal rectus fascia, on a side of the patient's urethra generally opposite the first side.

3. A surgical implant according to claim 1 wherein the first sling appendage is sized, shaped and configured to extend from a region near the patient's urethra to the patient's obturator foramen, on a first side of the patient's urethra, and

the second sling appendage is sized, shaped and configured to extend from a region near the patient's urethra to the patient's other obturator foramen, on a side of the patient's urethra generally opposite the first side.

4. A surgical implant according to claim 1 wherein the mesh material comprises bulk knitted polypropylene monofilaments, and

bulk material from which the mesh is supplied has at least a Longitudinal Elongation Factor (LEF) of 0.06 under a ½ pound load.

5. A surgical implant according to claim 1 wherein the implant is a composite constructed of two different implantable materials.

6. A surgical implant according to claim 1 wherein the major portion has a length sufficient to afford anchoring in the region of the patient's sacrum.

7. A surgical implant for addressing a female patient's pelvic health disorder comprising:

a synthetic mesh material having a portion adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region,

a first posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region to a first incision in the patient's buttocks that is lateral to the patient's anus;

a second posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region, on a side of the patient's anus different than that of the first posterior securement appendage, to a second incision in the patient's buttocks that is on a side of the patient's anus opposite the first incision; and

bulk material from which the mesh is supplied has at least a Longitudinal Elongation Factor (LEF) of at least 0.06 under a ½ pound load.

8. A surgical implant according to claim 7 wherein the first and second posterior securement appendages have distal end regions adapted to be secured in the patients ischiorectal fossa.

9. A surgical implant according to claim 7 wherein the portion adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region is sized and shaped to afford repair of a cystocele.

10. A surgical implant according to claim 7 further including a portion that is sized and shaped to afford repair of a rectocele.

11. A surgical implant according to claim 7 wherein bulk material from which the mesh is supplied has at least a Longitudinal Elongation Factor (LEF) of more than about 0.08 under a ½ pound load.

12. A surgical implant according to claim 11 wherein bulk material from which the mesh is supplied has at least a Longitudinal Elongation Factor (LEF) of more than about 0.15 under a ½ pound load.

13. A surgical implant according to claim 7 wherein bulk material from which the mesh is supplied has a Longitudinal Elongation Factor (LEF) of more than about 0.08 under a 1 pound load.

14. A surgical implant according to claim 13 wherein bulk material from which the mesh is supplied has a Longitudinal Elongation Factor (LEF) of more than about 0.1 under a 1 pound load.

15. A surgical implant according to claim 14 wherein bulk material from which the mesh is supplied has a Longitudinal Elongation Factor (LEF) of more than about 0.2 under a 1 pound load.

16. A surgical implant for addressing a female patient's pelvic health disorder comprising:

a synthetic mesh material having a portion adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region,

a first posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region toward a first incision in the patient's buttocks that is lateral to the patient's anus;

a second posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region, on a side of the patient's anus different than that of the first posterior securement appendage, toward a second incision in the patient's buttocks that is on a side of the patient's anus opposite the first incision,

a first flexible insertion sheath associated with at least a portion of the first posterior securement appendage, and

a second flexible insertion sheath associated with at least a portion of the second posterior securement appendage.

17. A surgical implant according to claim 16 wherein the first and second posterior securement appendages have distal end regions adapted to be secured in the patient's ischioanal fossa.

18. A surgical implant according to claim 16 wherein the first and second posterior securement appendages have distal end regions adapted to be secured in the patient's sacrospinous ligaments.

19. A surgical implant according to claim 16 wherein the first and second posterior securement appendages have distal end regions adapted to be secured in the patient's uterosacral ligaments.

20. A surgical implant according to claim 16 wherein the first and second posterior securement appendages have distal end regions adapted to be secured in the patient's levator ani tissue.

21. A surgical implant according to claim 16 further including a first dilator associated with the first posterior securement appendage, and
a second dilator associated with the second posterior securement appendage.

22. A surgical implant according to claim 16 further including a first connector capable of associating the first securement appendage with a needle, and
a second connector capable of associating the second securement appendage with a needle.

23. A surgical implant for addressing incontinence and cystocele disorders comprising:

- a synthetic mesh material having a cystocele repair portion adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region,

- a first posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region toward a first incision in the patient's buttocks that is lateral to the patient's anus;

- a second posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region, on a side of the patient's anus different than that of the first posterior securement appendage, toward a second incision in the patient's buttocks that is on a side of the patient's anus opposite the first incision,

- the implant including a urethral support portion capable of being placed underneath the patient's urethra;

- a first sling appendage for securement on a first side of the patient's urethra; and

- a second sling appendage for securement on a side of the patient's urethra generally opposite the first side of the urethra.

24. A surgical assembly for addressing a female patient's pelvic health disorder comprising:

- a synthetic mesh material having a portion adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region,

- a first posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region toward a first incision in the patient's buttocks that is lateral to the patient's anus;

- a second posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region, on a side of the patient's anus different than that of the first posterior securement appendage, toward a second incision in the patient's buttocks that is on a side of the patient's anus opposite the first incision,

- the first and second posterior securement appendages including a connector for associating the first and second posterior securement appendages with a distal end of an insertion needle.

25. An assembly according to claim 24 wherein the connectors include surfaces for dilating tissue.

26. An assembly for addressing a female patient's pelvic health disorder comprising:

- a first insertion needle having a distal end;
- a second insertion needle having a distal end;
- the first and second insertion needles being configured so that the distal end may be initially inserted through an incision in the patient's buttocks and then passed through tissue, emerging through a vaginal incision; and
- an implant comprising
 - a synthetic mesh material having a portion adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region,
 - a first posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region toward a first incision in the patient's buttocks that is lateral to the patient's anus;
 - a second posterior securement appendage that is sized, shaped and configured to extend from the patient's vaginal region, on a side of the patient's anus different than that of the first posterior securement appendage, toward a second incision in the patient's buttocks that is on a side of the patient's anus opposite the first incision,
 - a first flexible insertion sheath associated with at least a portion of the first posterior securement appendage, and
 - a second flexible insertion sheath associated with at least a portion of the second posterior securement appendage.

27. An assembly according to claim 26 wherein the portion of the implant adapted to be secured in the patient's vaginal region is adapted to be sutured to the patient's vaginal apex.

28. An assembly according to claim 26 further including first and second dilating connectors attached to the first and second flexible insertion sheaths for affording association between the implant and the distal ends of the first and second insertion needles.

29. A surgical implant for addressing a female patient's pelvic floor disorder comprising:

a synthetic mesh having a major portion, and at least four projections extending from the major portion,

one of said projections adapted to be placed on a first side of the patient's urethra and extend from the patient's urethral region to the patient abdominal rectus fascia, and

another of said projections adapted to be placed on a side of the patient's urethra generally opposite the first side.

30. A surgical implant according to claim 29 wherein the synthetic mesh comprises a knitted polypropylene.

31. An implant according to claim 29 further including a connector for associating the implant with an insertion needle.

32. An implant according to claim 29 including four connectors for associating the implant with four insertion needles.

33. An implant according to claim 29 wherein the implant affords cystocele repair.

34. An implant according to claim 29 wherein the implant affords vaginal vault prolapse repair.

35. An implant according to claim 29 wherein the projections are associated with insertion sheaths for aiding in implantation of the implant.

36. An implant according to claim 29 wherein the implant affords enterocele repair.

37. A modular assembly for affording construction of a surgical implant for addressing one or more pelvic floor disorders comprising:
an anterior element for affording a sling-like implant;
a posterior element for securement in a posterior region of the patient's body; and
a cystocele repair portion for affording repair of a cystocele, wherein the cystocele repair portion may be associated with either the anterior element or the posterior element or both elements.

38. An assembly according to claim 37 further including a means for facilitating association between elements of the assembly.

39. An assembly according to claim 37 wherein the cystocele repair portion includes indicia to facilitate trimming to adjust the implant to different sizes.

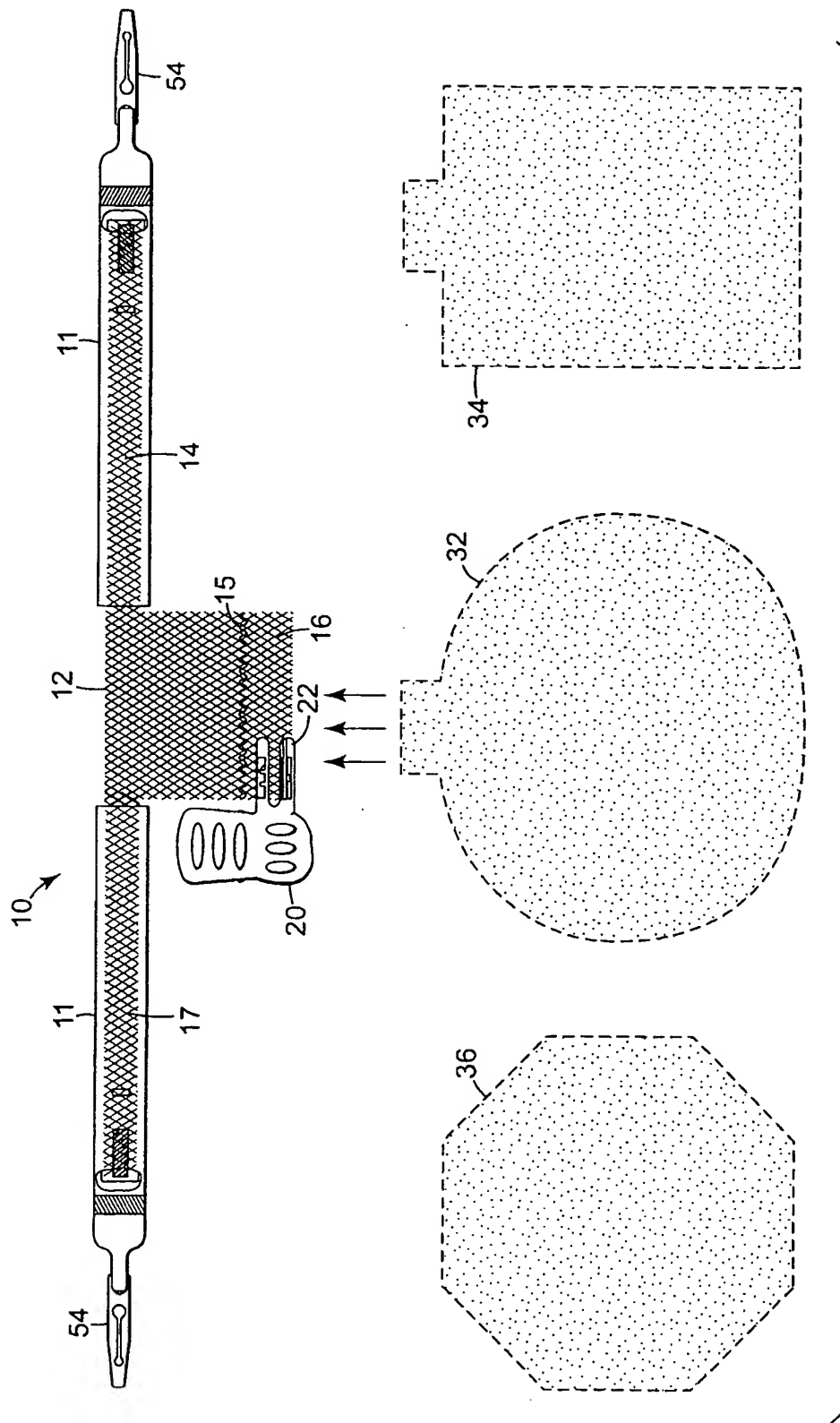


Fig. 1

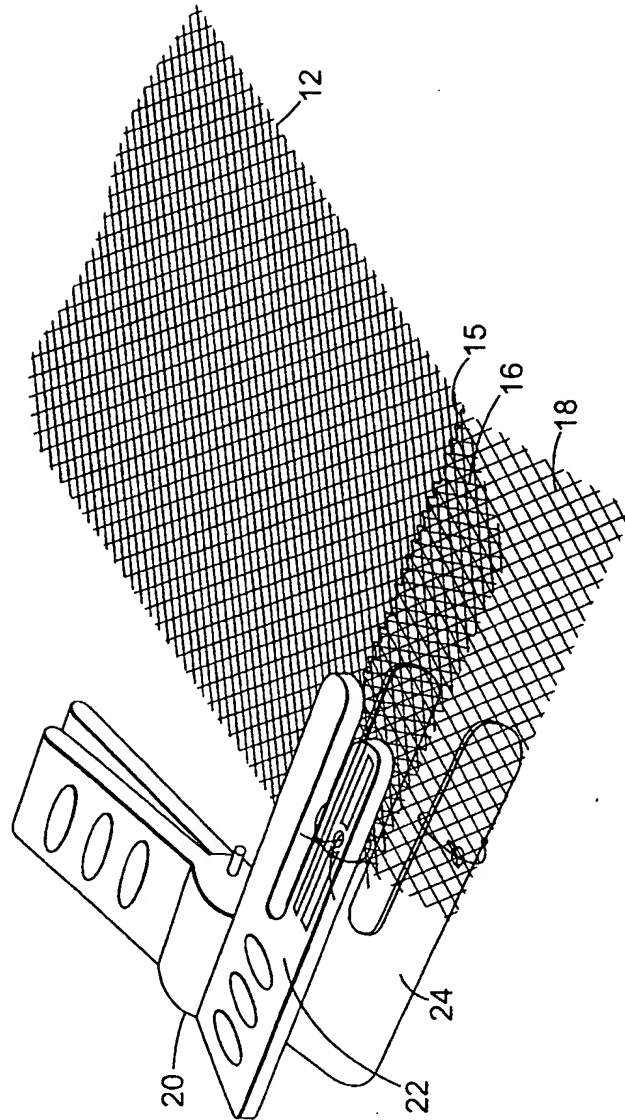
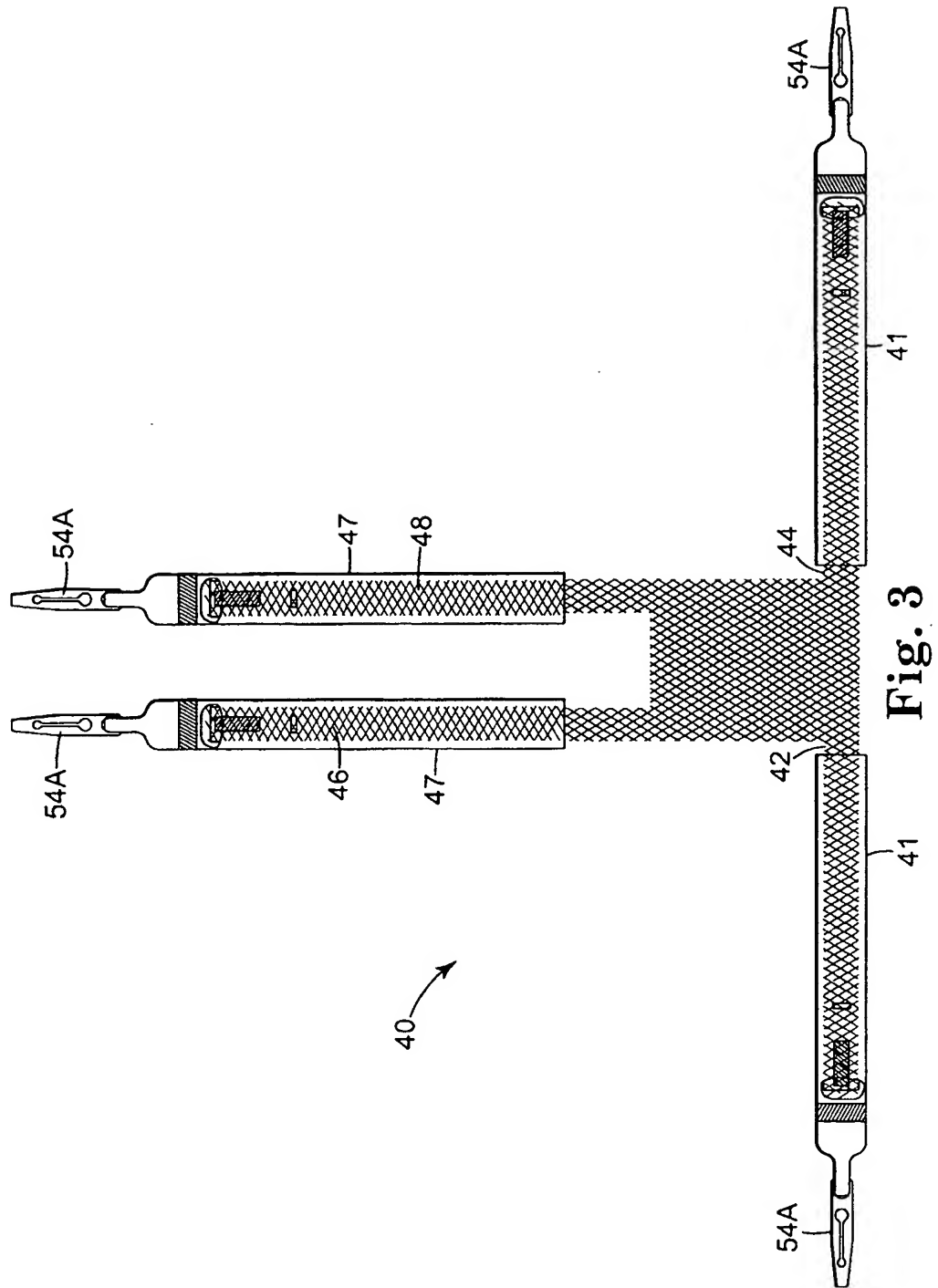
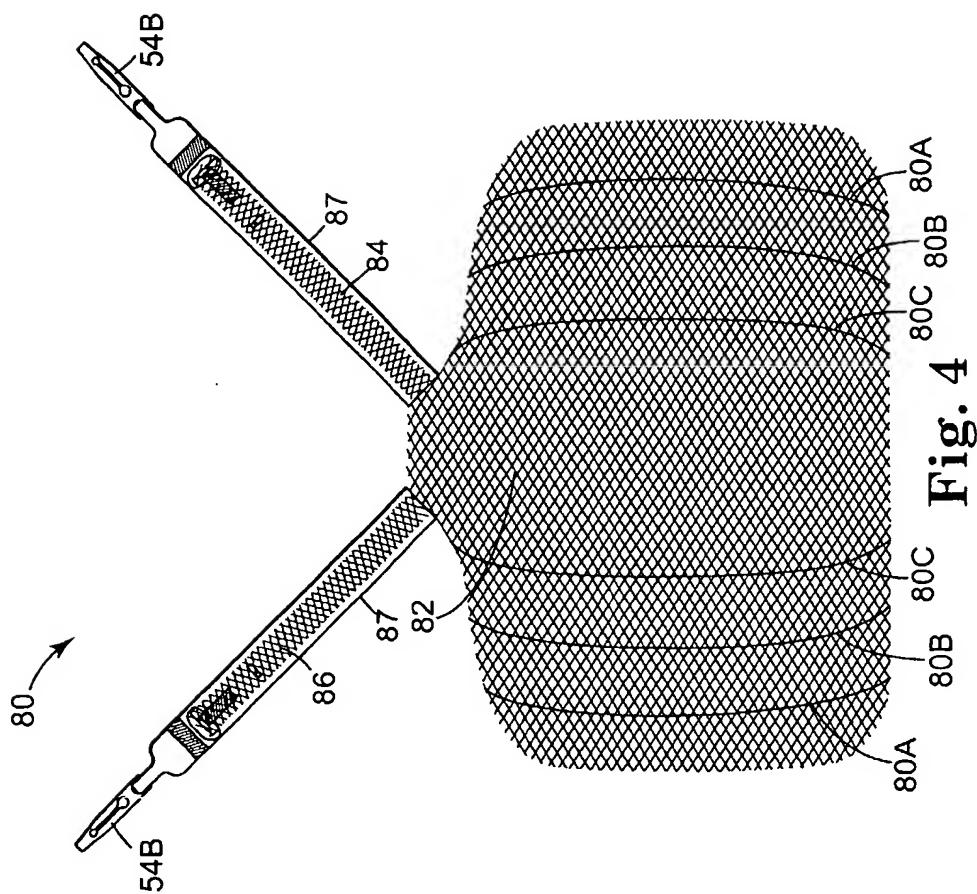


Fig. 2





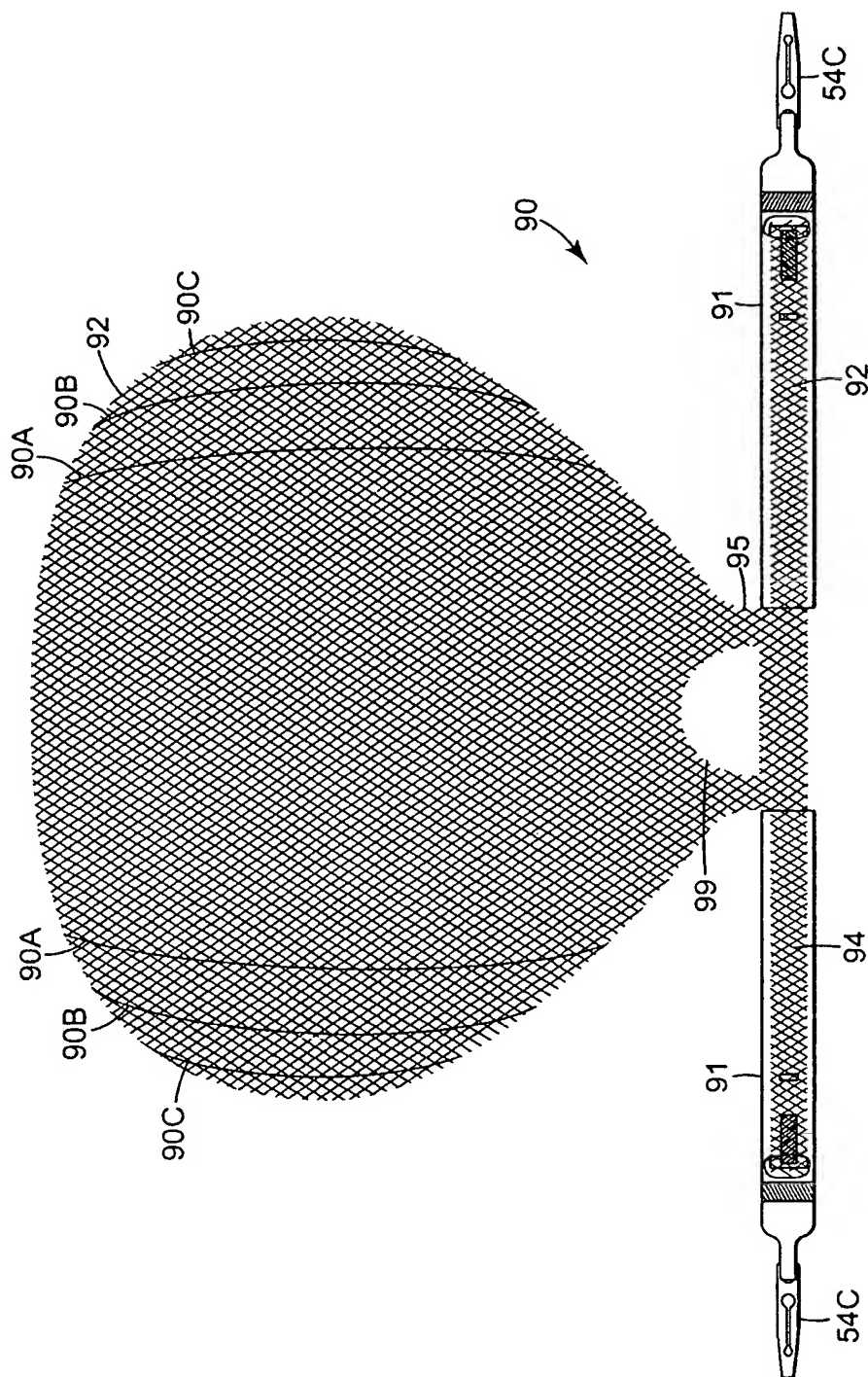
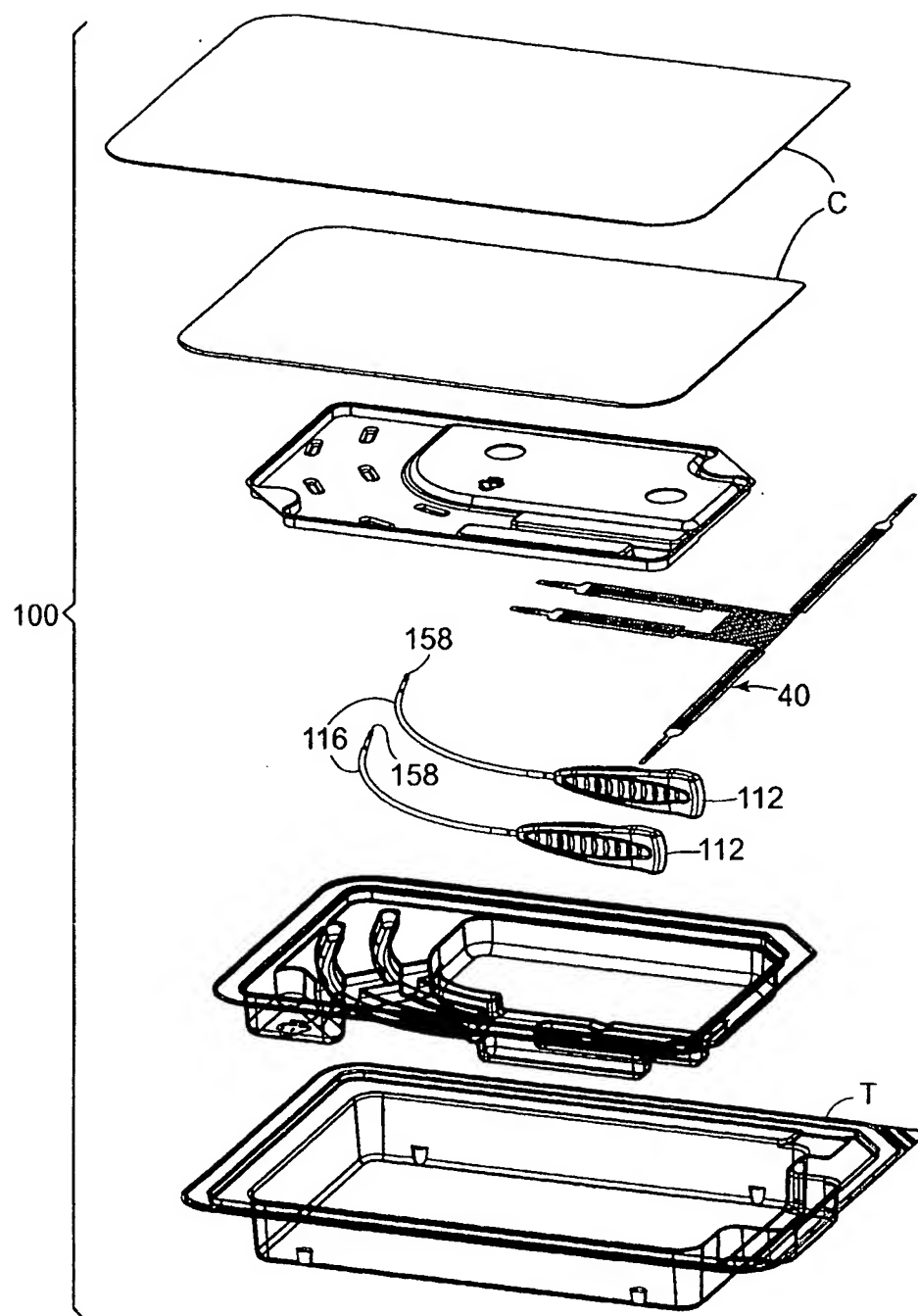


Fig. 5

**Fig. 6**

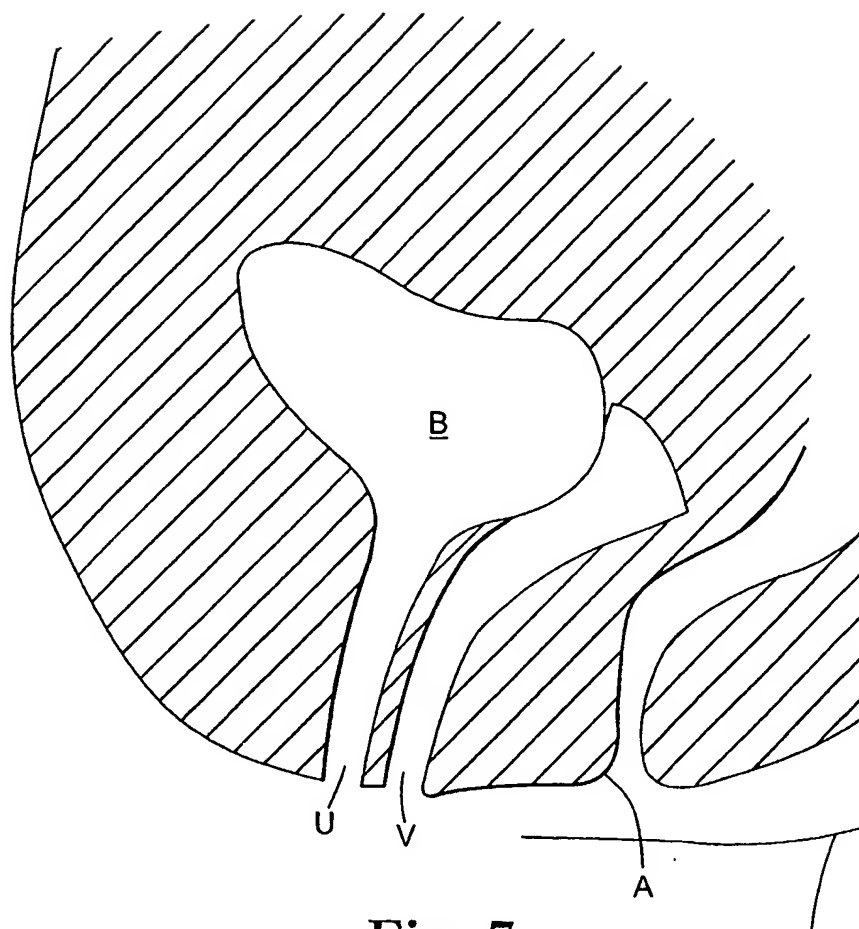


Fig. 7

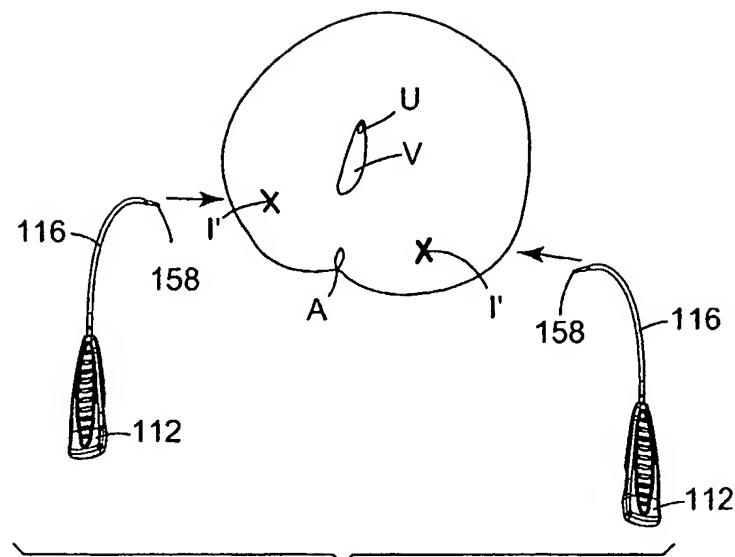


Fig. 8

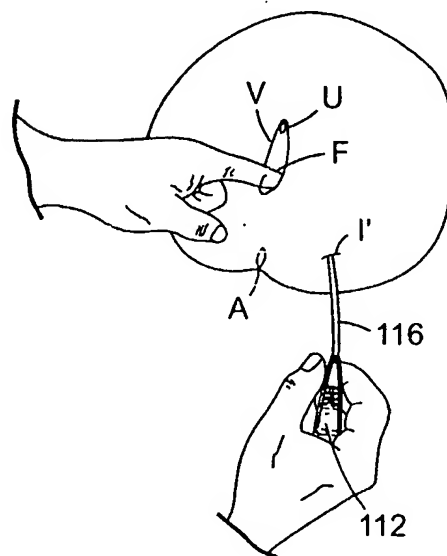
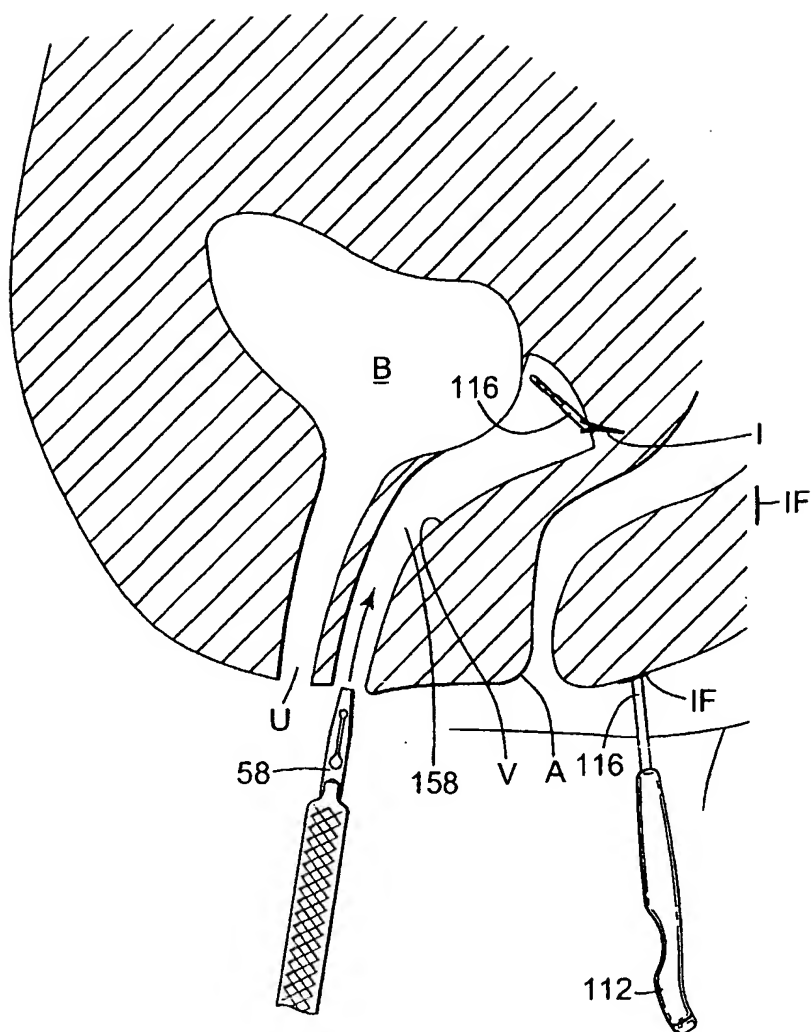
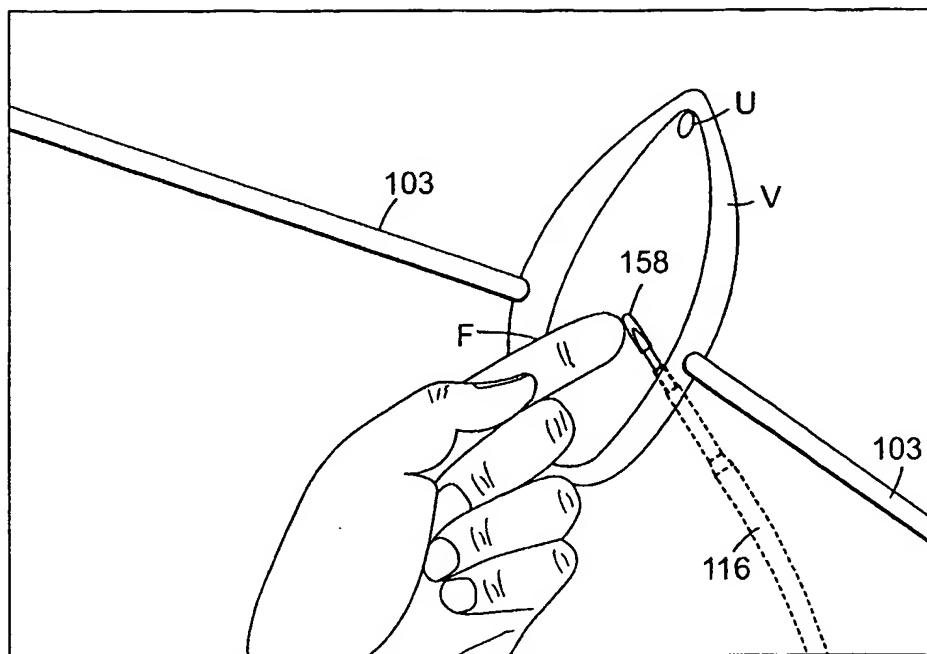
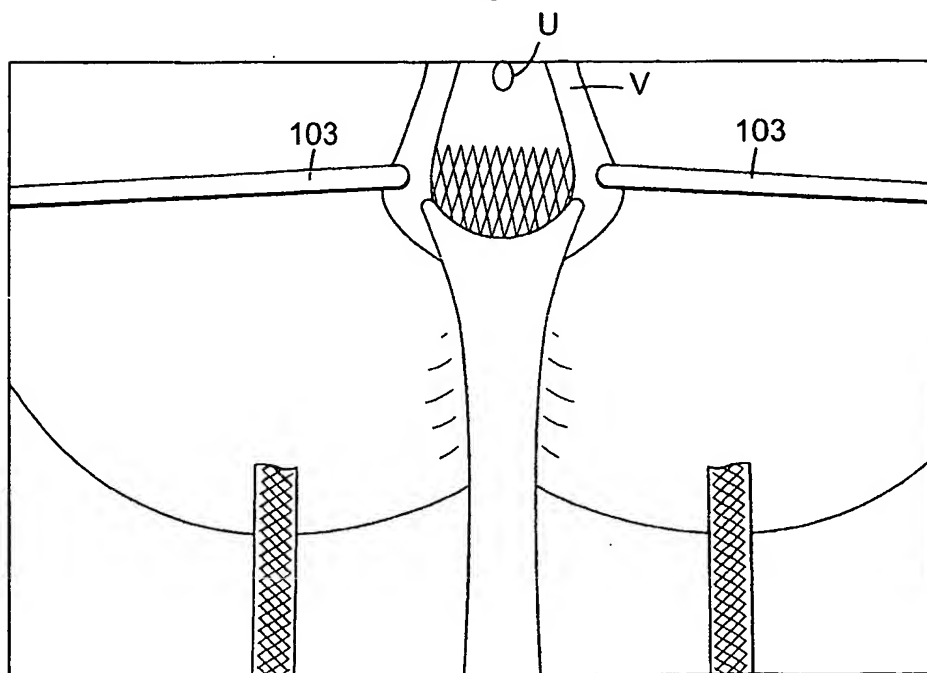
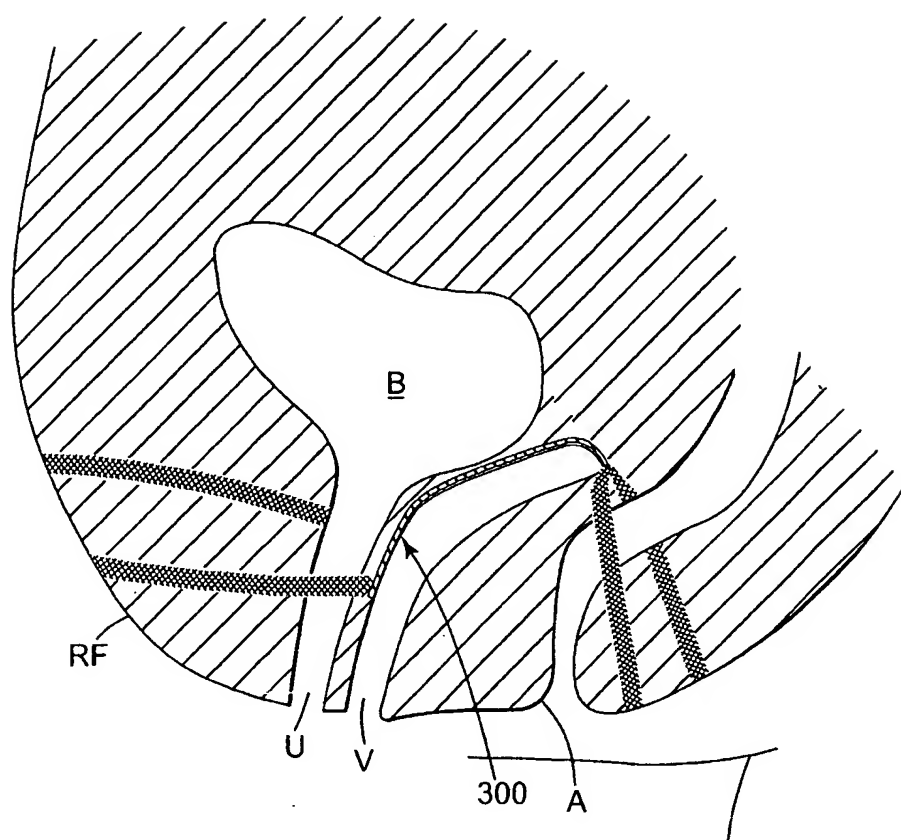
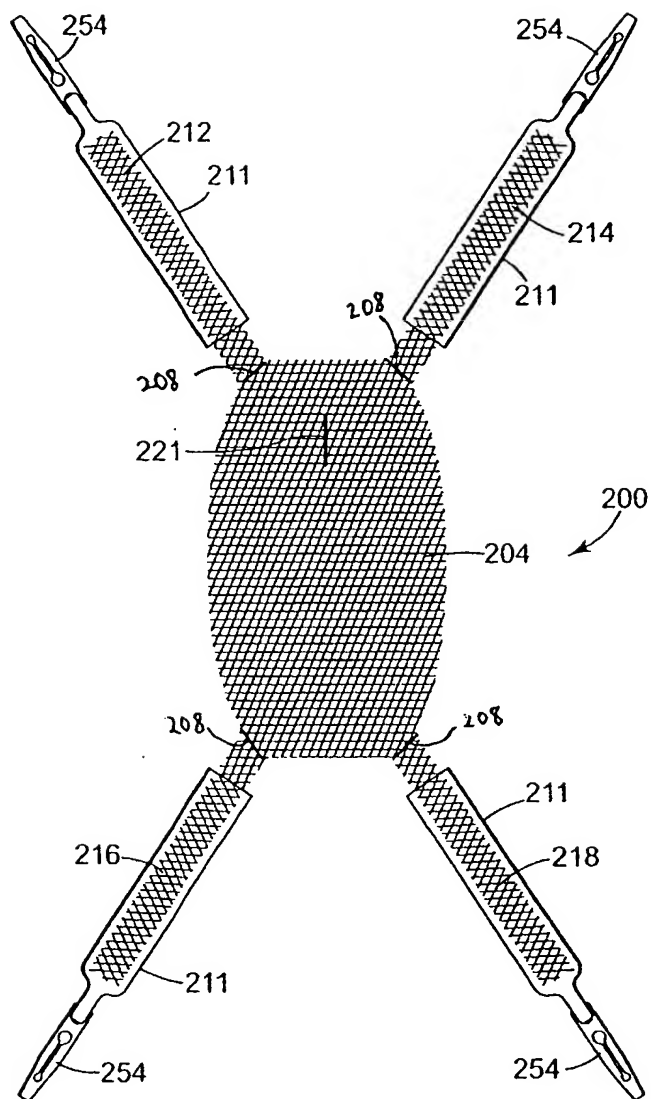


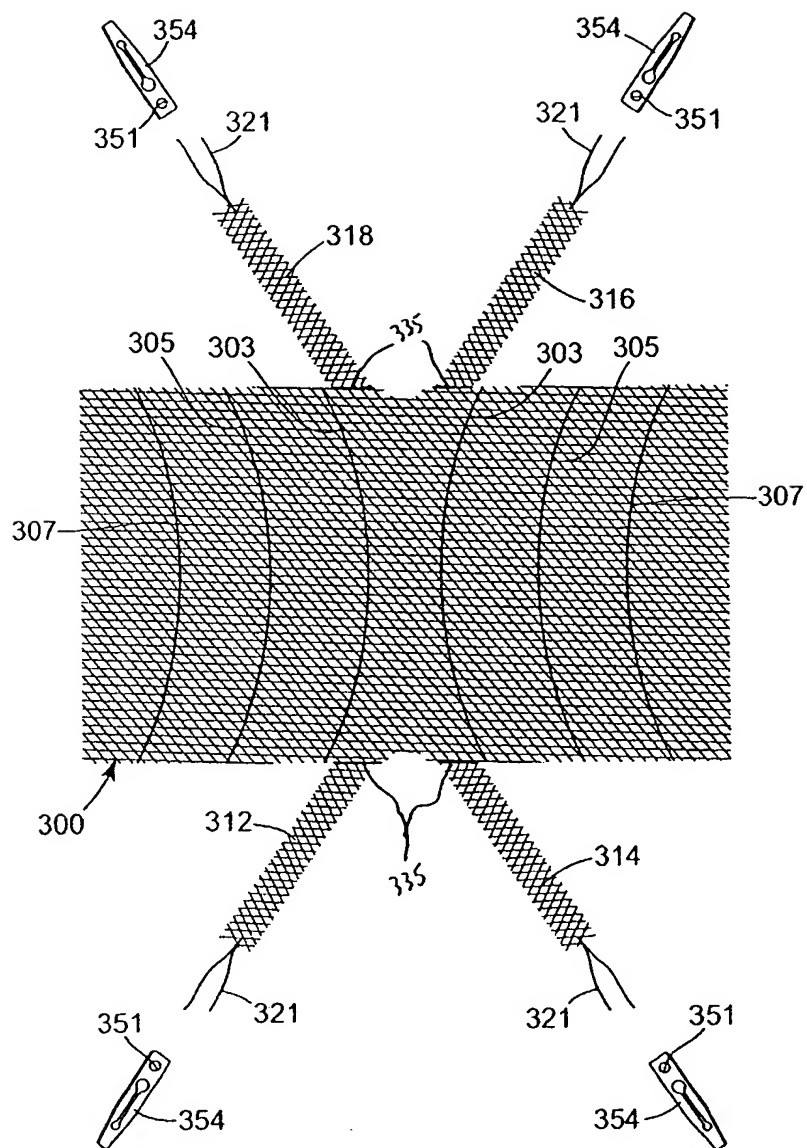
Fig. 9

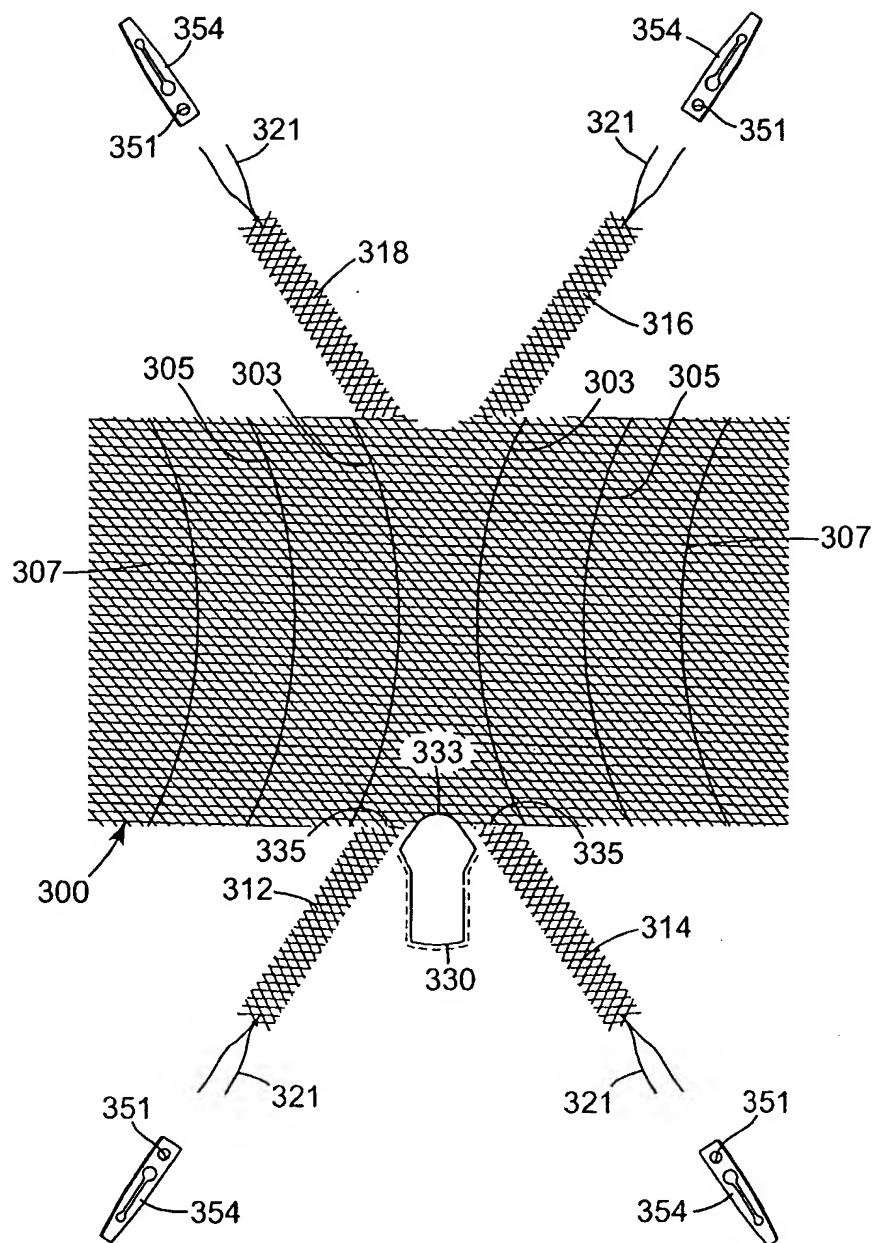
**Fig. 10**

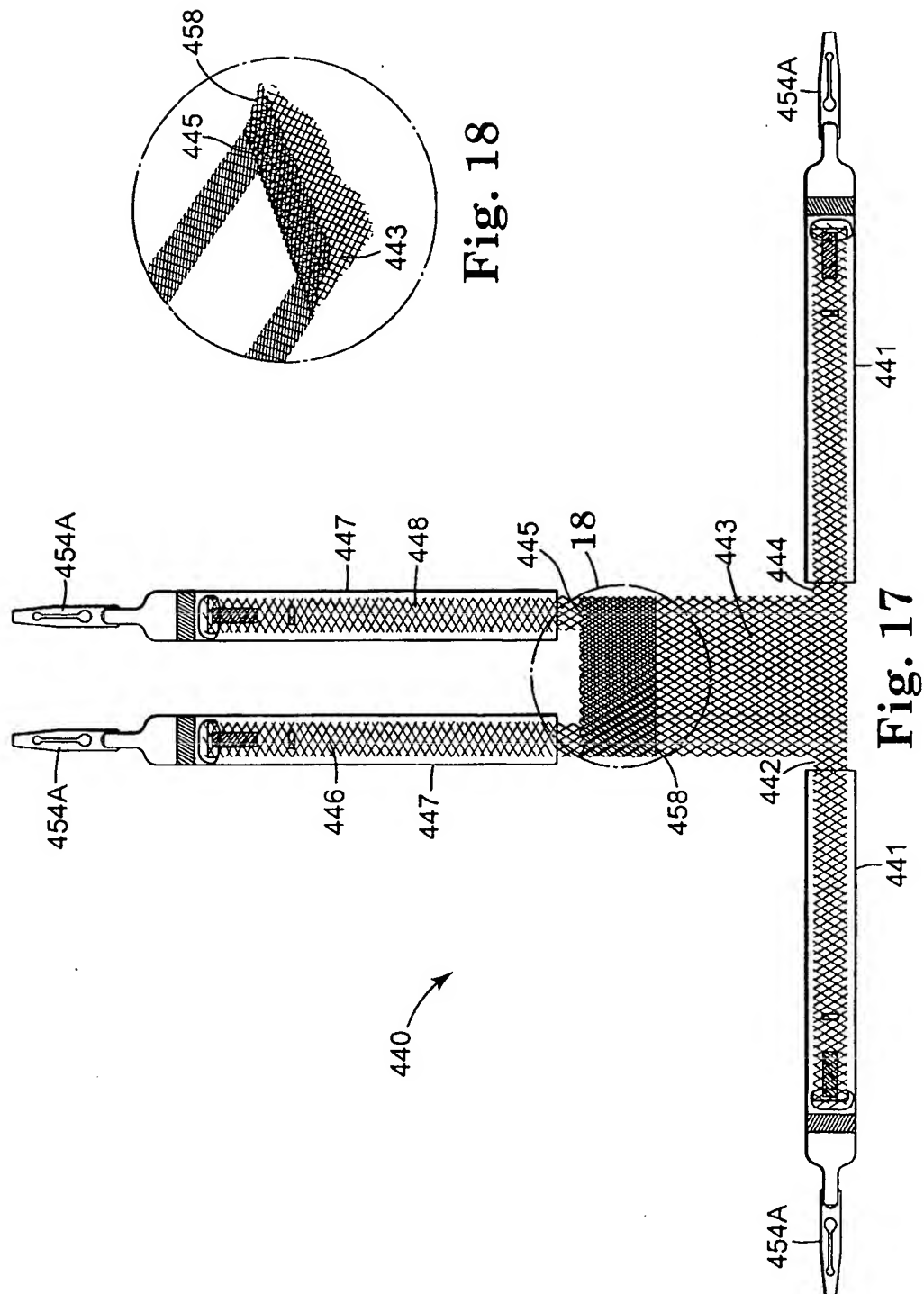
**Fig. 11****Fig. 12**

**Fig. 13**

**Fig. 14**

**Fig. 15**

**Fig. 16**



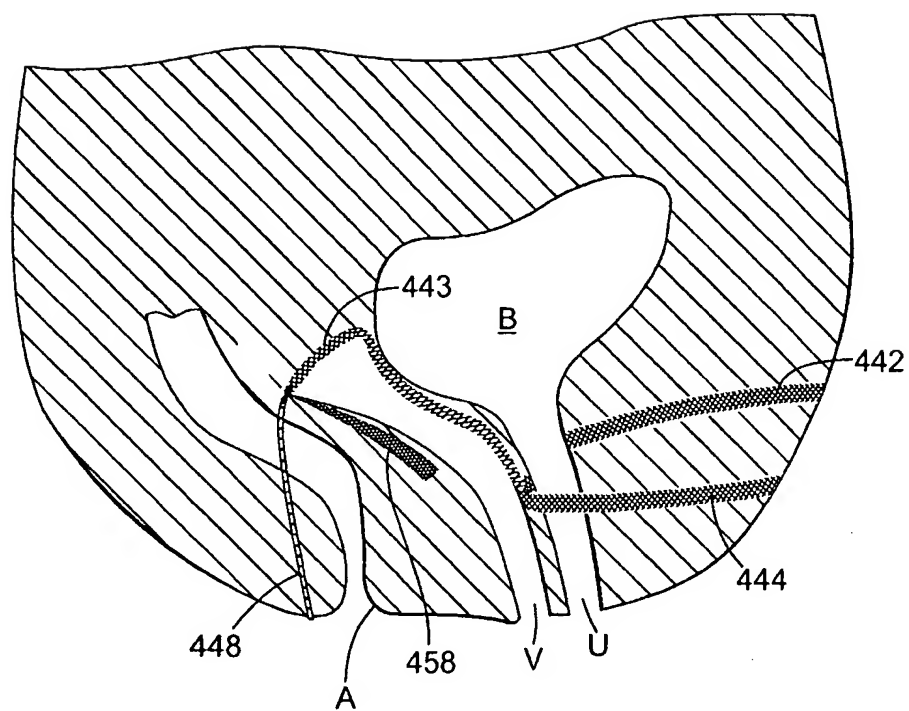


Fig. 19

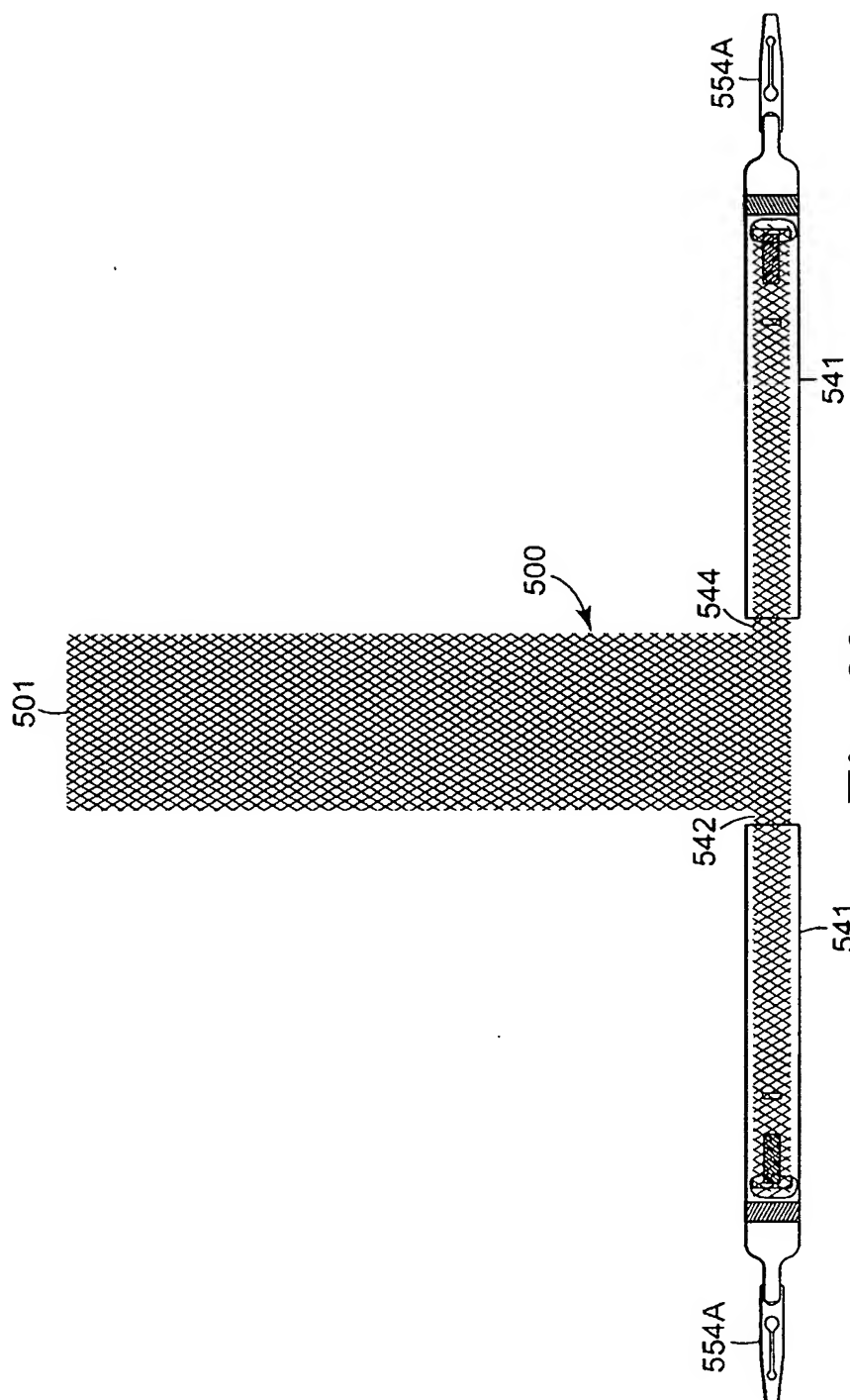
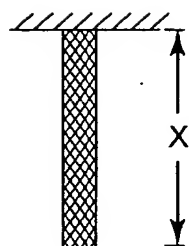
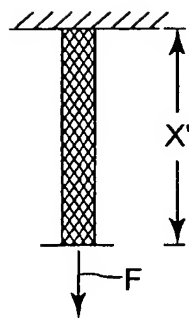


Fig. 20

**Fig. 21****Fig. 22**

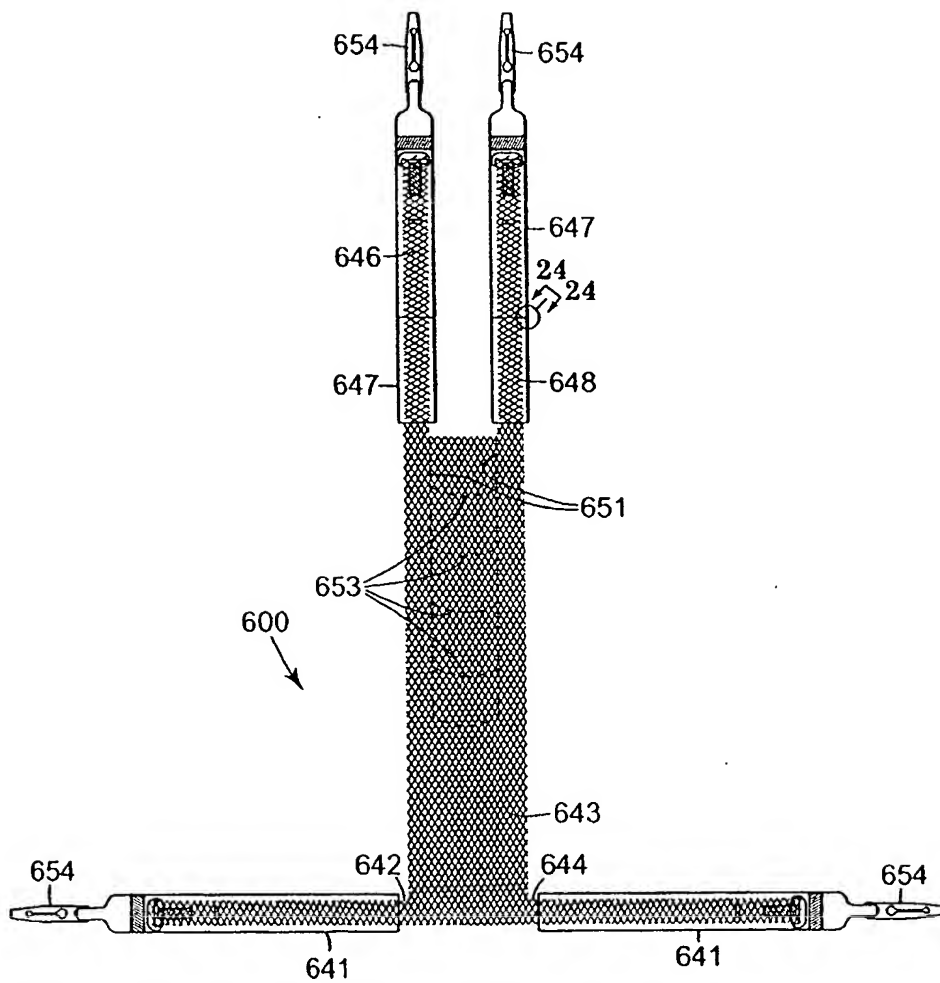


Fig. 23

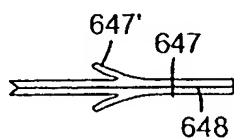
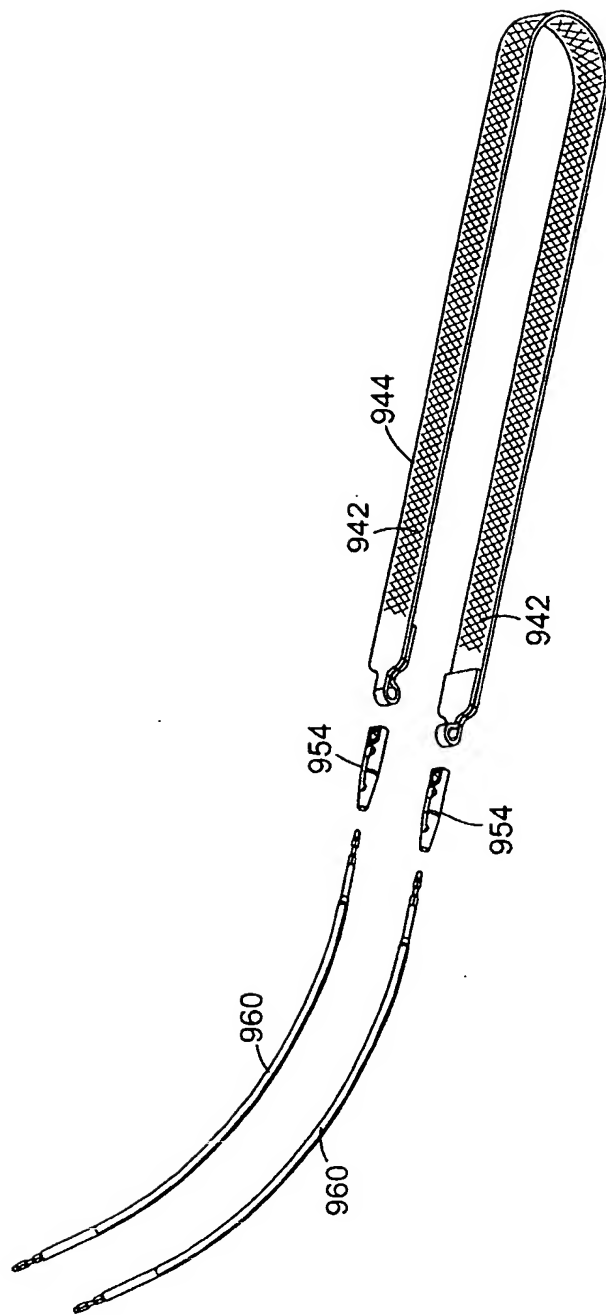


Fig. 24

**Fig. 25**

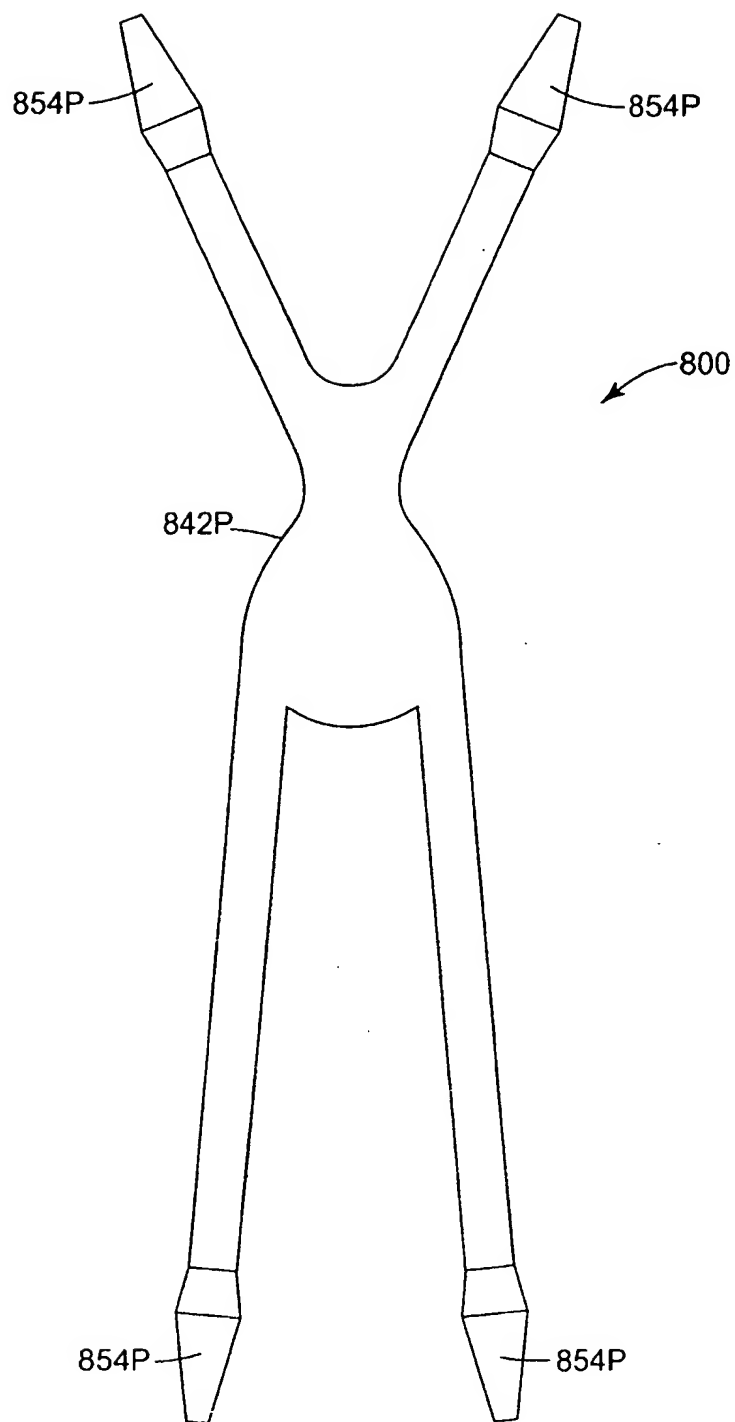
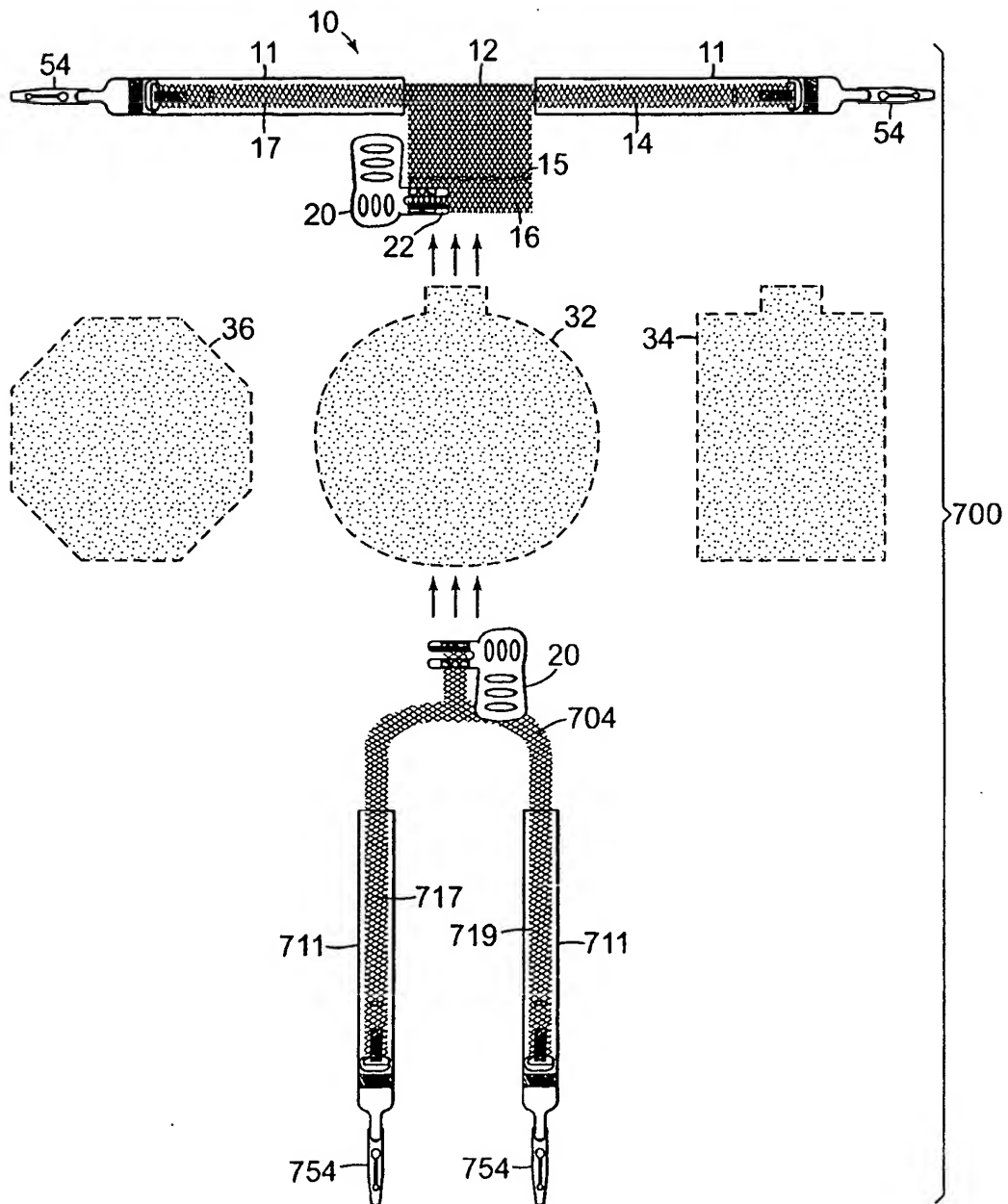


Fig. 26

**Fig. 27**

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Internal application No. PCT/US 03/13113

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7 A61F2/00

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 A61F

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	WO 01 06951 A (ANGIOLOGICA B M S R L ;MANCA ANTONIO (IT); CIANCI ANTONIO (IT)) 1 February 2001 (2001-02-01) the whole document	1-39
A	US 5 840 011 A (LANDGREBE SUSANNE ET AL) 24 November 1998 (1998-11-24) cited in the application the whole document	1-39
A	WO 98 35632 A (BOSTON SCIENT IRELAND LTD ;GELLMAN BARRY N (US); MARTIN WILLIAM (U) 20 August 1998 (1998-08-20) figures 10A,10B	1-39
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☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

- 'A' document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
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Date of the actual completion of the international search

7 October 2003

Date of mailing of the international search report

15/10/2003

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Korth, C-F

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Internu Application No...
PCT/US 03/13113

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	WO 00 27304 A (SOFRADIM PRODUCTION ;THERIN MICHEL (FR); ORY FRANCOIS REGIS (FR)) 18 May 2000 (2000-05-18) cited in the application claim 1; figures 1-4 ---	1-39
A	WO 99 16381 A (SCIMED LIFE SYSTEMS INC) 8 April 1999 (1999-04-08) figure 5 -----	1-39
A	US 6 306 079 B1 (TRABUCCO ARNALDO F) 23 October 2001 (2001-10-23) cited in the application abstract ---	1-39
A	US 2002/028980 A1 (THIERFELDER CHRISTOPHER A ET AL) 7 March 2002 (2002-03-07) cited in the application abstract -----	1-39

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No.
 PCT/US 03/13113

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